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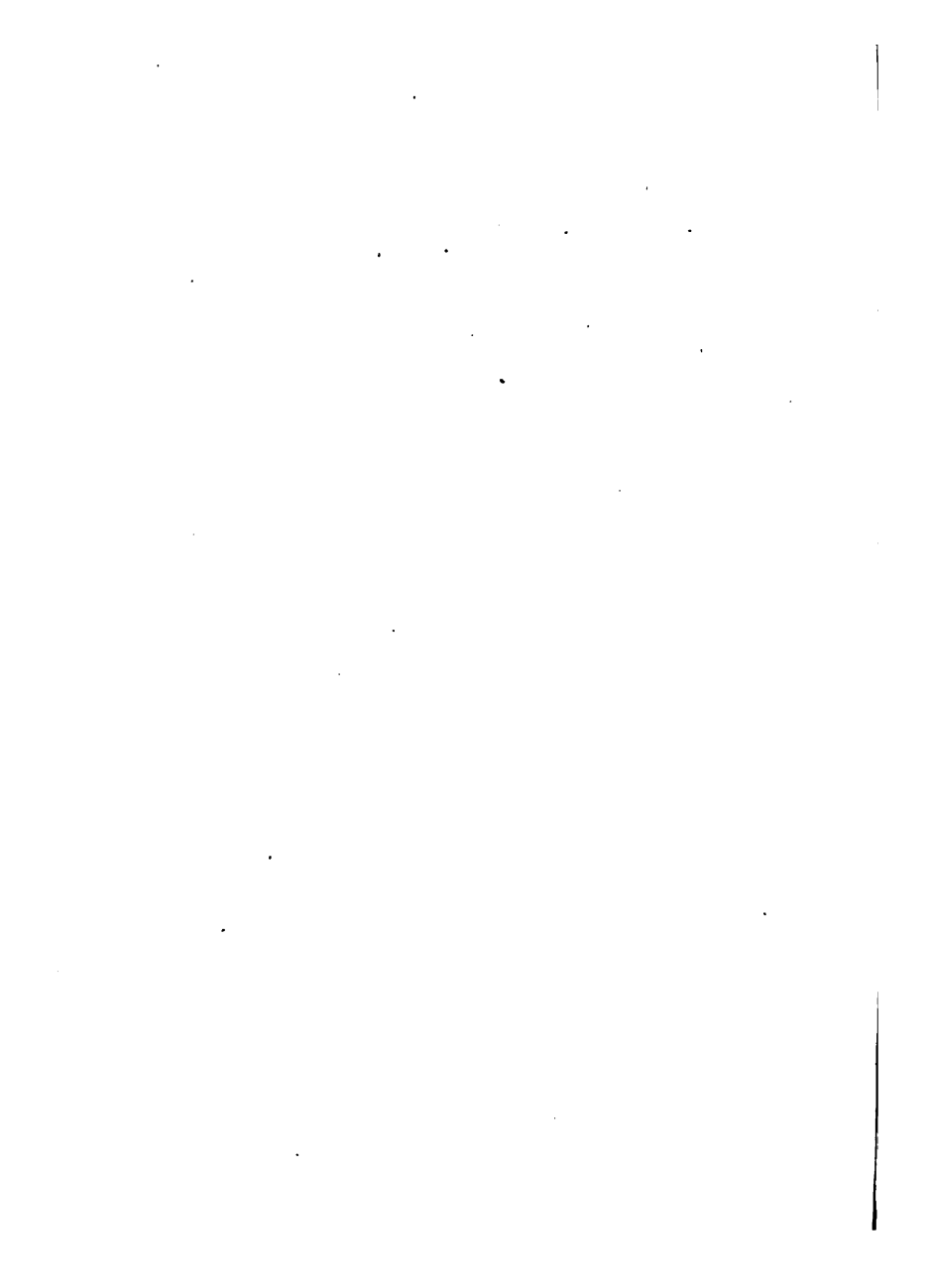
By
LADY BARKER

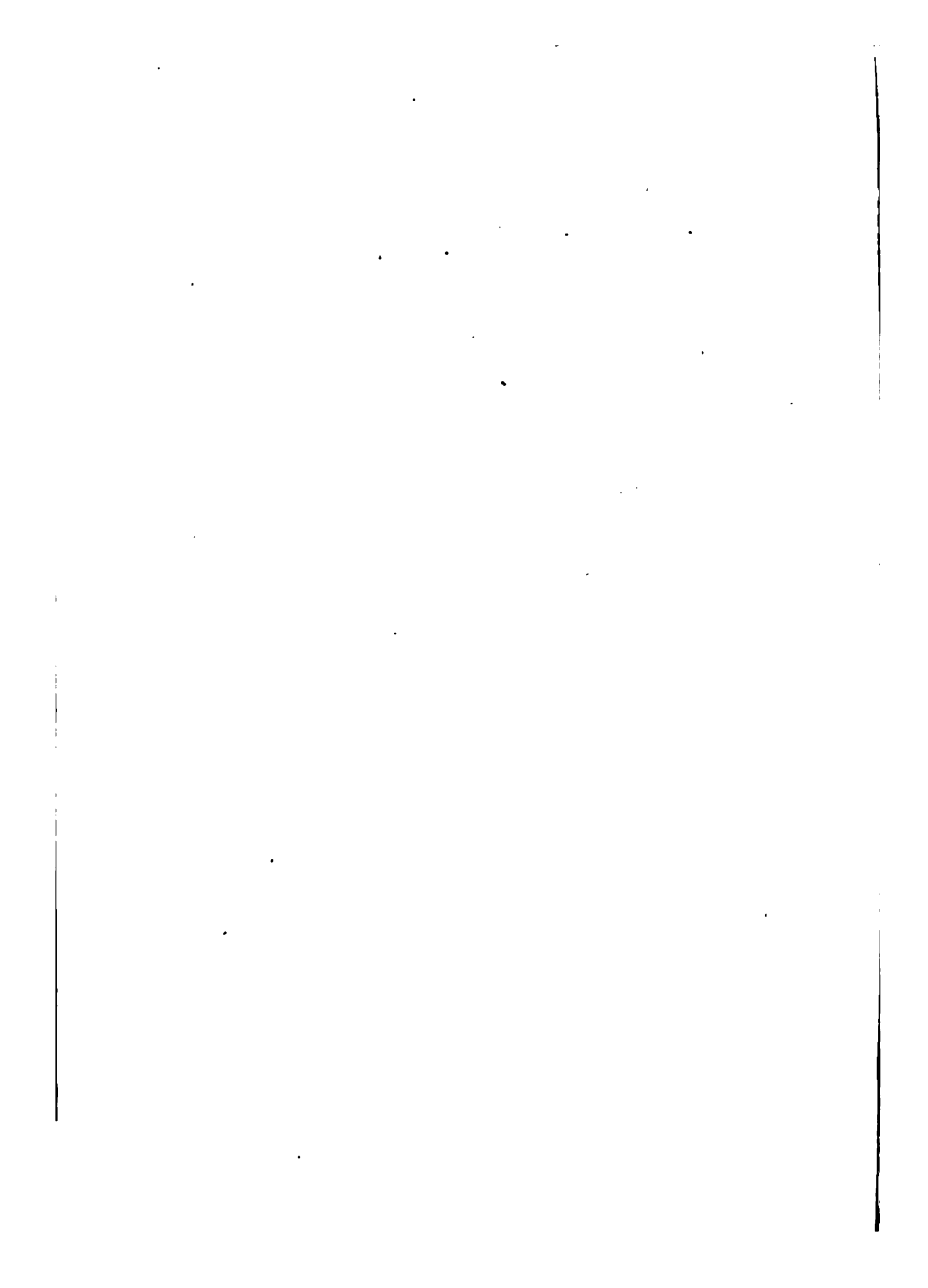
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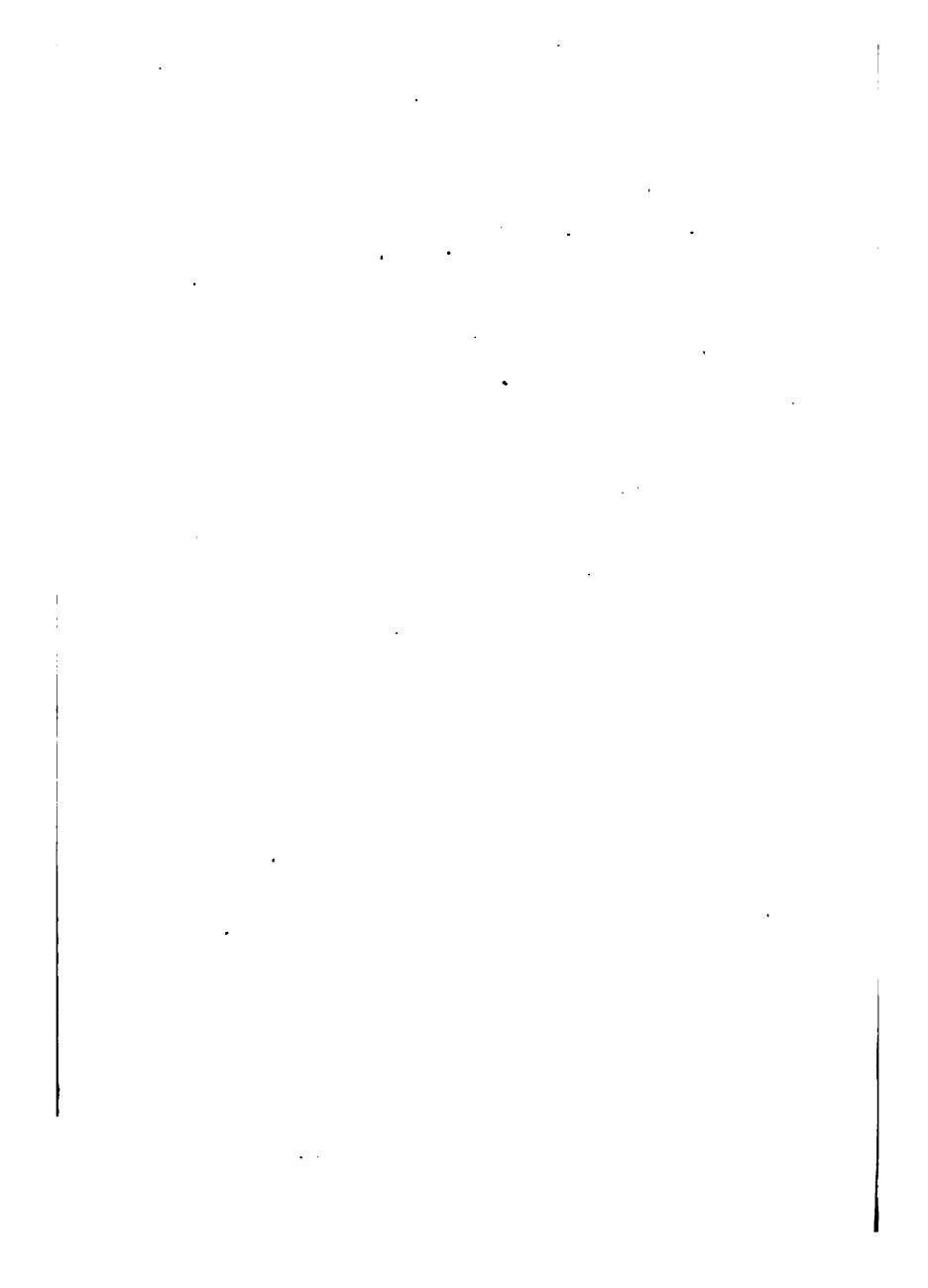


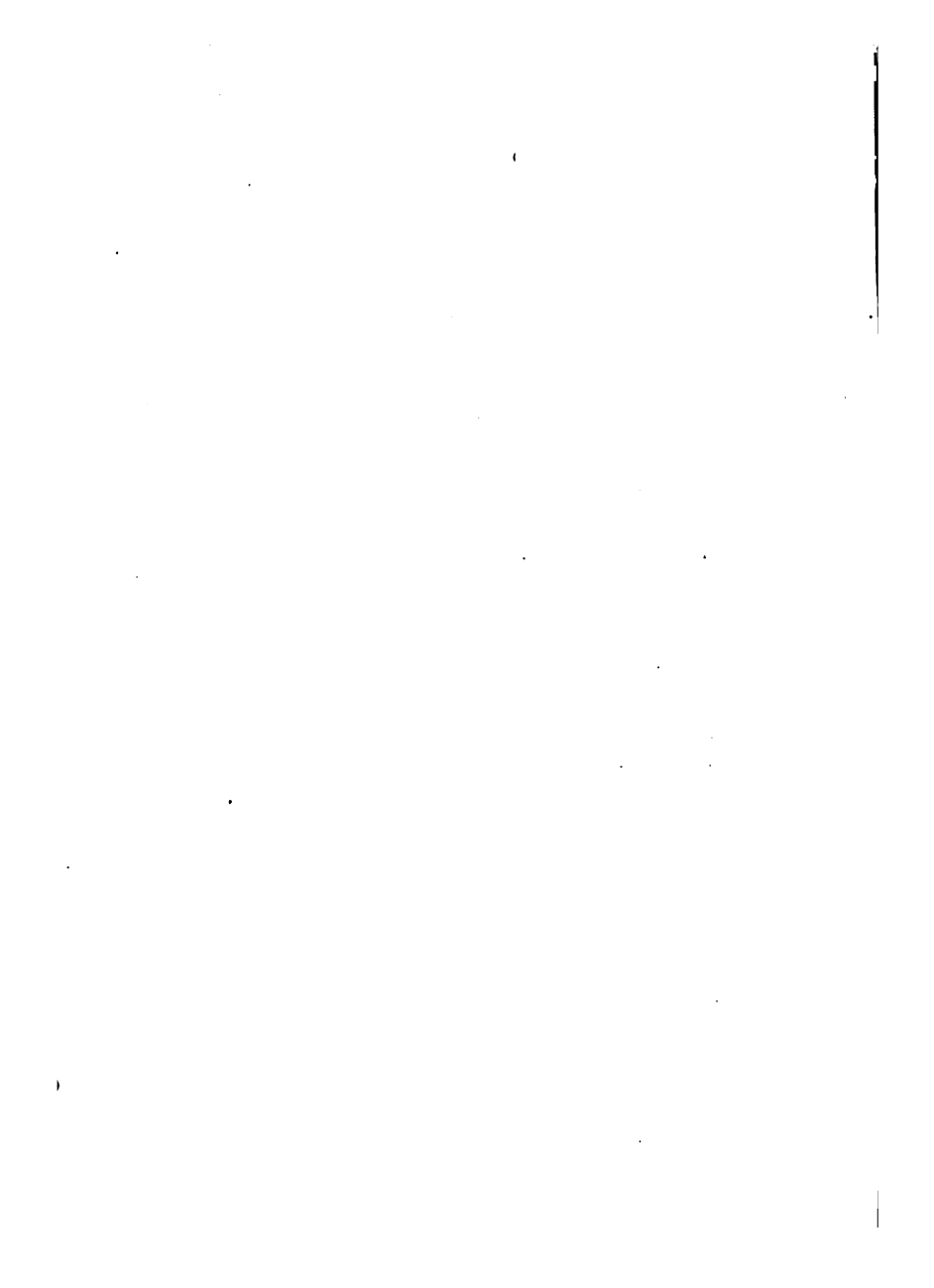
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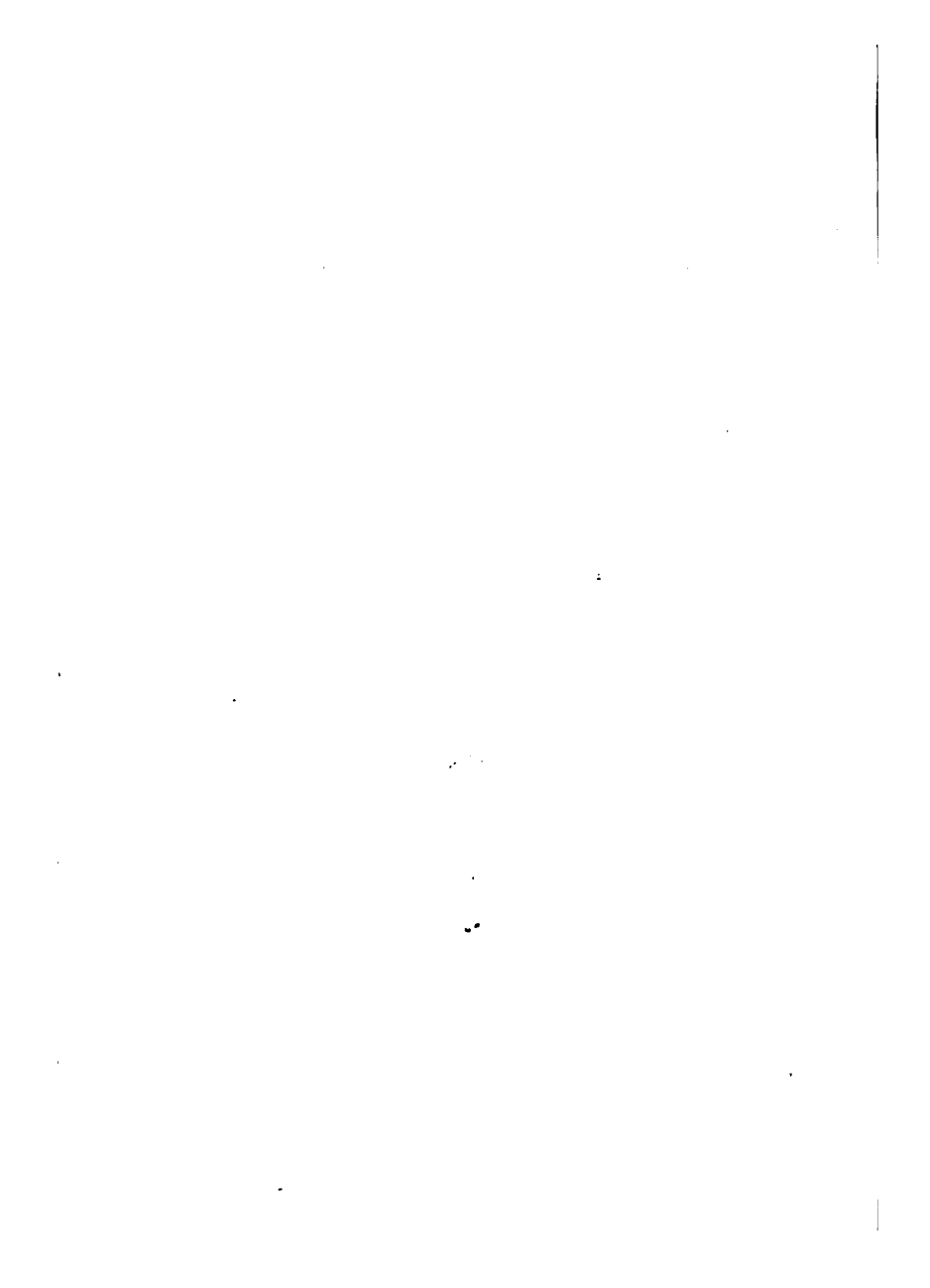








HOUSES AND HOUSEKEEPING.



HOUSES AND HOUSEKEEPING.

**A Fireside Gossip upon Home and its
Comforts.**

BY LADY BARKER,

Author of "Station Life in New Zealand," "Station Amusements," etc



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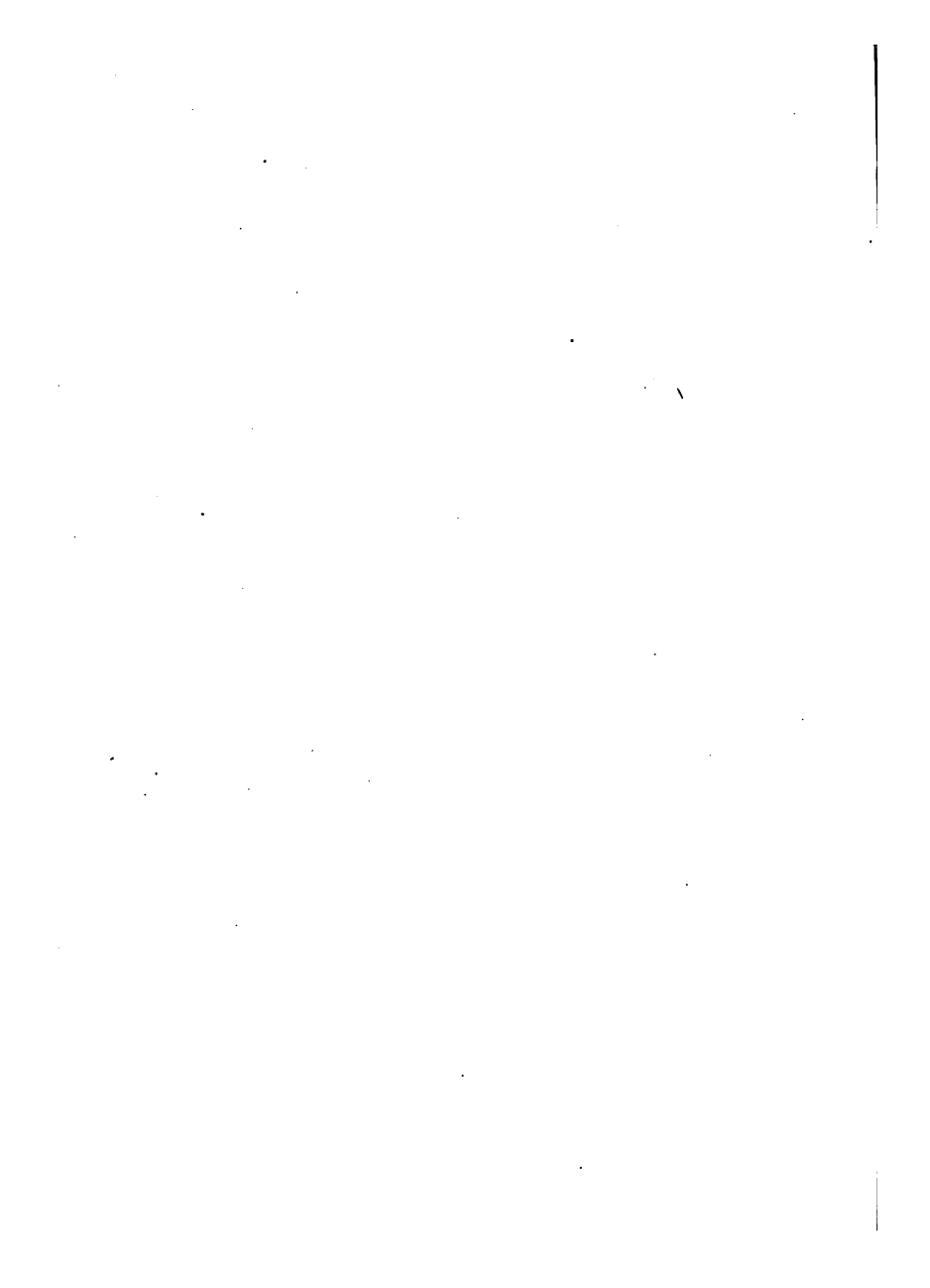
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PART I.

HOUSEKEEPING.



HOUSES AND HOUSEKEEPING.

I.

Pot-au-feu.

THE most attractive feature of the International Exhibition last summer was the School of Cookery. It was held in the small Annexe looking on the Exhibition Road, which had been occupied the previous year by the famous "Walter" Printing Press belonging to the *Times*, and by one or two other complex pieces of machinery. From the moment that the visitor turned to his right out of the long corridor, where silks and velvets from all the best looms in Europe hung in glistening folds within their plate glass turrets, from that moment he plunged into the subject of cooking. Avenues of stoves and fire-places naturally led the way

to a turnstile where he paid sixpence, and his next step was into the airiest and prettiest kitchen he ever saw in his life.

I say *he* advisedly, for there were quite as many men as women on the benches of the School of Cookery during the time it remained open, and altogether some 50,000 people passed through that turnstile between the months of April and October. To me there was something positively pathetic in the eagerness of the masses of decently dressed people to learn why their hard-earned money went such a little way in housekeeping, and how it might be possible to improve the monotony of the daily bill of fare, and yet reduce the weekly expenditure. Of course it was out of the question to teach them half they wanted to know, but no less than 300 lectures were delivered in the course of the season, and at each lecture there was what the committee called "demonstrations." The meaning of this somewhat vague word will appear in the course of these papers, in which I propose to describe that summer School of Cookery and its experiments, sifting as much as possible the practically from the theoretically useful.

Every step along this novel path, leading to the mouths of the British public, had to be felt

inch by inch. It was impossible to guess what dishes they would like and what they would turn up their noses at, but the only distinct and decided failure in the long list of experiments was, first, when the Committee attempted to teach the actual poor,—the lowest class of unskilled labourers,—how to make the most of the food within their reach, and next (at the other end of the social scale) when five shilling tickets were issued, and the advantages of “high class cooking” were proclaimed from the rostrum. In both these instances the failure was palpable; but the moment the old style of instruction was resumed, the doors of the pretty school were again besieged with clamorous would-be cooks. The reason of the failure to teach the very poor is not far to seek. In matters of health or food we all know, from our individual experience, how difficult that class is to reach. Those of us who have tried to introduce any little cottage reforms, will recollect how disheartening they have found the staunch conservatism of the very poor. What did for their fathers and mothers will do for them. The water from the well is very bad, or it’s quite true that a drop of broth is easily made and is very comforting; but then “the well has always been like that,” and “they

don't rightly know whether they can stomach the broth." Besides which, the sixpence entrance fee was too large a sum to be spent on listening to what they considered the gentlefolks' "fads," and the more industrious did not like to break into the best hours of their working day. So the real working classes stayed away, but there is every hope that the instruction given during all those long summer days may possibly filter down to them, as I will show presently. Then with regard to the failure of the high-class cooking, it was entirely due to the impossibility of procuring a proper instructor at a moment's notice at a time of year when all the world is giving dinner parties.

But instead of saying what the School of Cookery did *not* do, it will, perhaps, be more edifying to state what it may fairly be considered to have accomplished during its brief campaign, so we will return to the temporary kitchen. The Annexe was divided into two parts, each portion separated from the other by a counter, running the whole length of the building. Into this counter two gas stoves were fixed, for the convenience of showing the visitors exactly how each dish was prepared. The space behind amounted to about a third of the whole, and

represented the kitchen. In the background a couple of simple fire-places had been built into the temporary wall, and these again were surmounted by a shining pyramid or trophy of every conceivable saucepan, stewpan, fish-kettle, and *bain-marie*. But these were chiefly for show, and what particularly struck one in the arrangements, was the delightful simplicity of the culinary implements in actual use, and how few were necessary. Behind this long counter stood the head-cook, an elderly man, clad all in white, from top to toe, and on either side of him were placed a couple of idealised kitchen-maids. Many an envious glance used to be cast at the deft and easy method in which these self-possessed damsels handled their frying-pans and gridirons, doing their work without soil or stain to their neat and pretty costumes. If I mention their dresses here it is not only because I wish to make my picture complete, but because it is really a good thing to know what sort of dress a woman can wear which will be at once serviceable and pretty. Very few words will enable my readers to see the South Kensington kitchen-maids (as they were in 1873), for themselves. A rather short and full petticoat of black and white striped cotton print. A loose

brown holland body and upper skirt in one, bordered with a little frill of the same, and gathered in by a blue belt round the waist. The tight sleeves were rolled up to the elbows, nor were there any flapping streamers anywhere. A tidy collar was kept in its place by another few inches of ribbon, and a plain white muslin mob cap, also confined by a narrow blue ribbon, preserved the plainly braided hair from dust. Over the whole dress a stout working apron or bib was worn, made of some coarse material, but the shape was exceedingly becoming, whilst it thoroughly answered its purpose of keeping the dress perfectly clean.

In a sort of pulpit close by stood the lecturer, whilst the audience were seated on closely packed chairs facing the counter. Those in the first four rows had paid an extra sixpence, and had the privilege of tasting what had been prepared, of which they never seemed slow to avail themselves, at the end of each lecture, which lasted a little over an hour.

The plan pursued was as satisfactory as could be well imagined, although difficulties stood like so many lions in the path of the committee; and the amount of necessary organization beforehand could hardly be realized by an inexperienced

person. However, when the doors were fairly opened, towards the end of April, the public only beheld the result of much labour and trouble,—an exceedingly pretty, well-ventilated and spacious kitchen, and the staff I have just described. The lecturer, Mr. Buckmaster, never failed to make his appearance in his little wooden box twice a day, and as the *pot-au-feu* was the first, so it was the most popular of the practical lessons he gave. The cooking, I must premise, was carried on in duet-fashion, for there were two stoves and two “demonstrators,” and two pieces of beef, and even two *bouquets garnis*. In short every dish was a performance *à quatre mains*. First came a nice piece of lean beef, about six pounds weight, of the kind generally known as the “silver-side.” So uncultivated and base was my culinary disposition at that time, that I must confess I never *could* see that joint put into the large saucepan without a wild desire to rescue it, corn it, pickle it, and eat it boiled, with dumplings. But the symmetrical piece of beef used to be carefully and neatly tied up into an imaginary parcel with strong string, and put into a saucepan, which had previously been filled with cold water, and the *bouquet garni* added. This consisted of a few

sprigs of sweet herbs and a clove of garlic. Who knows what a clove of garlic is? Apparently nobody did, for the lecturer proceeded to show us that it was a section exactly like the bulb of a snowdrop, taken from a cluster of such bulbs, and this "clove" is the most delicate and unsuspected form in which the required flavouring of garlic or onion can be introduced. And here I must say boldly that although garlic or onion should be present in *all* savoury flavouring, it must be so skilfully concealed that the palate should be unable to separate that particular flavour from the rest. Pepper and salt were next added, and in such matters the cook must be the judge. It is of no use attempting to educate a girl into an automaton. She must possess delicate senses of taste and of smell, and have a fine instinct about quantities. You might just as well observe closely how Millais sets his palette, and hope to produce the sheen of his satins and the ripple of his brooks by using the same proportions of paint and turpentine, as expect to make a good cook by means of scales and measurements. At first such things are useful, but should soon, in the true artist, give place to a higher guiding instinct. This quality needs to be supplemented by ex-

perience, but no amount of experience will do instead of it.

Some sliced vegetables were then added, and the whole affair placed to simmer gently on the gas stove. As the scum rose, half a cupful of cold water was added, which lowered the temperature and showed the film of fat more plainly on the surface. This fat needed to be incessantly removed with a tin skimmer, and in time every particle of grease was thus eliminated. But it would have been impossible to complete the operation before the most patient of audiences, for it needed four hours' slow simmering to extract the juices from the meat. So we used to see one day that which had been commenced the previous morning, and I must say the result was truly excellent. In the first place, there was enough and to spare to feed a dozen people, and even at last summer's high prices each meal could have been provided in this way for about sixpence a head. Now my boiled beef and dumplings would not have fed six people; that I must acknowledge!

I have purposely dwelt on the scene of these novel cooking arrangements, because in telling a story—and I foresee that these papers will drift into a sort of story—both writer and readers

prefer to begin at the beginning, but I hope, in the course of my narrative, to transfer to you a good deal of the exceedingly useful and practical instruction I carried away from numerous visits to the South Kensington kitchen.

One word about the audience will, perhaps, fittingly close this preliminary sketch. The benches were chiefly filled by people from what we should call the upper classes. That is to say, there were very few, if any, really poor people to be seen on them. Well-dressed ladies sat side-by-side with worn-looking clergymen, and the quantities of country people were something astonishing. I always knew these latter by their fresh faces and the large nosegays of flowers they used invariably to hold in their hands. I sometimes wondered why they brought them; if they had any dim idea that the perfume of roses and stocks would ward off "blacks," or prevent fatigue? But at all events there the poor blossoms were, imprisoned in shields of old newspaper, and drooping in their owners' hands. Many and many a note-book was also to be seen, whose owner was earnestly attempting to fix, by its help, some of the useful hints in his or her memory.

II.

The Omelet.

NEXT to the *pot-au-feu*, the omelet used to be the favourite dish of the visitors to the Summer School of Cookery. I am inclined to think that most people look upon an omelet as an extremely difficult culinary undertaking, and yet it is the easiest thing in the world to make properly, if you are not afraid of it. Latterly this simple dish came to be regarded with increased reverence and awe, because the Queen, with her accustomed kindly interest in social questions, visited the Exhibition one fine morning and watched the manufacture of a plain omelet, which Her Majesty afterwards tasted and approved of. But yet my own private conviction is that that particular omelet was probably the worst ever turned out in that particular kitchen, for the simple reason that everybody was nervous! Now if you are afraid of your

omelet, adieu to its lightness, its colour, or its frothy sputterings. The timid or nervous cook can only hope to produce a cold, tough, tasteless mass, which will be either burned black, or remain nasty and raw in the middle. Again, an omelet is a very ungrateful dish, for the more actual trouble you take about it the worse it will most likely be. I mean that although great care is necessary always, and the beginner should thoroughly understand the *raison d'être* of the savoury dish, its actual manufacture should be quickly and lightly carried out, with perfect confidence. If you are not *sure* of yourself, don't try an omelet, at all events if other people have to eat it.

In omelet making, as in many other dishes, attention to minor details is the necessary preliminary to anything like success. It is no use dreaming of an omelet unless your fire is right. Sometimes it is made over a gas stove, but my own individual predilection is for an open fire-place. It gives more trouble, perhaps, but any woman who has the necessary love of her art will not stop to consider that. Although a really good manager may so arrange her duties as to reduce her own manual labour to the lowest point of efficiency, such reduction will

be the *result*, not the *motive* of her method. If a cook or anyone else starts by thinking in the first place with how little trouble to herself she can get through her work, depend upon it the work will be badly done. But yet how common is the criticism on a well-organized establishment, that the work seems to do itself. I am convinced that this silent service is the moral of the fairy story of the White Cat, where everything was perfectly done, and yet the doers never appeared.

However, at this moment our business is with the organization of an omelet, not of a household, and here are the details from whose consideration I have sadly strayed. First, a perfectly clear, smokeless fire ; a fire you can trust, and which will not suddenly collapse to so low a point that the heat cannot reach your pan. Next, a perfectly clean frying or omelet pan. Would that the lazy cook who invented the theory that frying pans should be "left in the grease" (which means that the grease should be left in *them*), could be found and put in the pillory! It is such an odious and horrible fallacy, and yet it is an article of culinary faith with many an honest cook. The slightest soupçon of fat which has been used for anything else is

fatal to an omelet. Of course the highest and best condition for *all* frying is either the purest and most costly Lucca oil, or perfectly good fresh butter, unless, indeed, you can depend on the quality of your salt butter. But as my object in this, as in every line I write and every word I say, is to teach poor people that it is possible to make nice things out of economical materials, I must declare that I have tasted excellent omelets fried in dripping, excellent cakes and biscuits made with dripping, instead of butter, besides many other dishes, to the due production of which butter at twenty-pence a pound is generally considered absolutely necessary. Let people who can afford to buy butter at that price buy it by all means; but there is no real reason why those who cannot should go without omelets, as well as many other little delicacies.

Well then, we must take great care,—if we are obliged to use dripping for an omelet,—that it has been well clarified, and is as clean and pure as it can possibly be. Put about a quarter of a pound, or, in measurement, a good-sized table-spoon liberally filled, into the scrupulously clean omelet pan, over a clear, bright, and very hot fire, and give your attention to your eggs. Three will be

quite enough for a manageable omelet for a small family. Break each egg separately into a cup; smell it, and satisfy yourself that it is what it should be, for the least doubt on the subject will be fatal to your omelet. Then lightly whisk up these three eggs with a pinch of pepper and salt; do not laboriously beat them beyond the necessary point of froth and lightness, which point should be attained in a couple of minutes. Now the more solid material of the omelet should be added to the eggs, and this should have been prepared beforehand, only there must not be too much of it, for your omelet cannot possibly reach the goal of your ambition if it starts too heavily handicapped (I don't exactly know what that word means, yet it feels as if it were the one I wanted). A good large table-spoonful will be ample of almost anything, so long as it is chopped finely enough, for that is the real secret. Sweet herbs, parsley, the least taste of shredded onion, a little cold fish, a scrap of ham or tongue, or a bit off the breast of a fowl or game, anything ever so small, which can be grated or chopped almost to a powder. By this time the fat will be at boiling point, only I advise a young beginner to be very sure on the subject, and not to trust to

guess work. It should either be tested by a trinometer (a little instrument resembling a thermometer) or by the old-fashioned method of dropping a pellet of bread or sprig of parsley in, and observing whether it turns brown directly. Into this angry and excited liquid the mixture, which must be whisked and beaten up to the last moment, should be boldly poured at once, not timidly dribbled in by degrees. Then drop your whisk, and seize a *clean* wooden spoon, stirring evenly, but quickly, for a moment or so, holding the frying pan in your left hand and the spoon in your right. The omelet will speedily begin to set, and so soon as it has taken a decided form change the spoon from your right to your left hand, for shaking is now of more importance than stirring. Indeed stirring is over; all the use of the spoon now is to gently raise the edges of the fast-forming omelet from the frying pan, out of which the fat is rapidly evaporating. The shaking is a great knack, and for that reason I recommend beginners to use a small omelet pan with a rather long handle, so as not to get their hands too close to the fire. Five minutes is the outside limit which can be allowed for cooking an omelet, and it probably will not require so long. Of this the cook alone can be

the judge, and she should steer clear between burning her omelet jet black,—which will assuredly be its fate if she lets go the handle of her frying pan or ceases shaking for one second,—and serving it up pale and yellow, with a flavour of raw eggs in the centre. But when the mixture has settled into a bubbling, spluttering film of a rich golden colour, the size and shape of a small plate, and of a consistency impossible to describe on paper, but perfectly easy to recognise if even once seen, then she may turn what is now an omelet into a very hot dish, and serve it up without a moment's delay or hesitation.

I would not warn absolute beginners against trying to fry the unhappy thing on *both* sides, or attempting to give it a false consistency by sprinkling flour into the compound, if I had not actually and truly committed both those errors (I had almost written crimes) myself. Indeed, the appearance of my first omelet—it must have been truly awful. I know that it may have been said to resemble Falstaff, not only in size and consistency, but because, like him, though “not witty in itself, it was the cause that wit was in other men.”

III. *

The National Training School for Cookery.

PUBLIC attention has lately been much attracted to the National Training School for Cookery,—which was the out come of last year's sixpenny Lectures,—that a short account of its method of teaching may not be out of place here. Although I shall show at a future opportunity that the *real* object of the Training School has not been attained, yet I am compelled to begin with a brief sketch of how the second part of the programme the Committee laid down for themselves, works, which second part, however necessary and desirable it may be, is not the whole aim or object of the School. Yet I must needs describe and explain this

* The reader must bear in mind that these chapters were written in 1874, and that the organization and method of instruction in the National Training School of Cookery have undergone many changes since then.

second part first, for the simple reason that it is the part on which the public have fastened most desperately.

I declare, then, as a person who has seen it all from the very beginning, that there is something positively pathetic in the eagerness of the rush of learners to the Training School. It is not only that the terms are very moderate (£2 2s. for the whole course), but that the universal cry is, "We have never known where to go before." If it were only young servants, or young ladies who thronged to the doors every Monday morning, it would not be so strange; but the crowded classes comprise elderly housekeepers, grey-haired, middle-class cooks, who tell me, confidentially, that although they have been in service for years, and have found and kept comfortable places, they have *never* had any definite instruction in even kitchen-maids' duties, nor ever "known"—to use their own phraseology—"rightly how to cook." Surely this confession of incapacity may be echoed by many an unhappy mistress, who has as little idea how to teach her willing but ignorant cook, as the poor servant has had opportunities of learning! I could fill pages with stories of the amusing and yet touching scenes which go on in my office at

the School in Exhibition Road. Sometimes little confidences are made to me by a blushing young lady who is charmingly dressed, and looks like a freshly-gathered rose in my dingy little room. "I don't mind telling *you* my real motive for coming to learn," she says. "I am going to be married, and we" (this 'we' comes out in an enchanting manner, after a little hesitation) "shall not be very rich at first, and I want Harry to be comfortable. You see I can't learn things at home: Mamma's fine cook does not seem to care about teaching me, and indeed thinks young ladies had much better not marry at all until they can afford to keep good (!) servants."

Then despairing mistresses who live a long way off in the country, send up—without dreaming of writing previously to ask me if I can take them in—their stolid, stupid servants, to be popped into our magic crucible, and suddenly converted into good cooks. One such unpromising pupil appeared the other day, in charge of a much-medalled *commissionaire*. He briefly told his errand, produced the fee, and was departing swiftly and joyfully, when I interposed, and said I had received no notice of his charge's desire to become our pupil, and could

not take her, as the classes were crowded, and over-crowded for that week. The poor man's horror and dismay were indescribable. He looked from me to the "fat, foolish scullion," who had never a word to say for herself, and cried,—literally wringing his hands,—“What in the world shall I do with her, then?” Of course I could not tell him, but I never shall forget that poor guide's despair at the prospect of his protégée's society for an unlimited period.

How everybody abuses the hard-worked unhappy mistresses of “Furnished Apartments.” How little they are credited with the least desire to increase the comfort of their lodgers! And yet, among our first applicants were half-a-dozen boarding-house keepers who came to learn—and took immense pains to learn, too—how to vary and improve the cooking in their establishments. “Not before it was wanted,” will be the remark. Quite true; but have they ever had a chance before, poor things?

But to return to an actual account of the machinery and working of the scheme, which was set on foot by a committee of gentlemen, who give their time and trouble for nothing. No sooner had they made their desires known to the Commissioners of the International Ex-

hibition, than the large kitchen, used for last summer's lectures, was placed at their disposal gratuitously, and the fire-places and cooking utensils made over to them, at a reduced cost. Next four good cooks had to be selected with infinite care and trouble, and placed under my charge, as Lady Superintendent, after which we spent a few weeks in rehearsing,—in learning *how* to teach, in fact. Then the doors were thrown open to the public, and for the first eight or ten months the classes of learners were filled to overflowing. The way we managed was this: the learner's name was put down a couple of weeks beforehand, and when the Monday for which it had been entered arrived, she presented herself at ten o'clock at the door of my office, paid her fee of £2 2s., got her receipt, took off her bonnet and shawl, tucked up her sleeves, and donning a large bib or apron (which she brings with her), walked into the scullery for a couple of hours' hard work among the pots and pans. Now if this class comprised only girls from a training school, or young servants, one could understand the situation; but there were to be found in it not only smart young ladies, who had been dancing at a Queen's ball the night before, but married ladies of high position

and social standing, who appeared to discover suddenly that they knew nothing of the *raison d'être* of their kitchens. Besides these, there are middle-aged housekeepers from great houses, who, in answer to my ill-concealed surprise that they should need our teaching, assure me they have no idea how even a copper saucepan should be cleaned. Nor is this wonderful when it turns out that housekeepers put in charge of these details are often superannuated nurses, or clumsy but faithful ladies' maids.

Well then, as fast as this heterogeneous but thoroughly-in-earnest class assembled, which it used to do within five minutes of the hour, it set to work. Some went to clean sieves, others to scour copper, iron, and enamel saucepans, others to clean tin dishes. Every morning two learners cleaned a fire-place (alternately a close and an open range), and two more cleaned a gas stove. Some washed down deal tables until they became white as milk, and after these details were thoroughly mastered, they then had to learn how to melt and clarify fat and dripping, to wash and peel potatoes, to light a fire, besides sundry other things which I cannot stop to specify here. This was called the preliminary course, and the time it took varied according to

the intelligence and capacity of the learner. Some cooks came to us to be improved, who already knew, and we will hope, practised, these arts of cleanliness, and they are only required to do each thing once to prove their knowledge. Educated ladies learned very quickly, and could pass out of this morning drudgery in a week or ten days. Servants to be trained took longer, and we required them to do every thing in turn once *alone*, to show that they had really learned it, and could do it by themselves.

No one came both morning *and* afternoon. As soon as the preliminary course had been finished, the learners presented themselves at two o'clock instead of at ten, and learned until four o'clock how to cook. This course occupies a fortnight, and the learner was taught soup and broth-making, roasting, boiling, stewing and frying in the first two days; entrées and vegetables on the next two afternoons, with jellies and creams for the fifth and last day of the culinary week. Then the next Monday, how to cook fish in many ways is taught, followed on Tuesday by omelets and soufflés. Next day puddings, next day pastry; and sick-room cooking closes the list. We generally found this course quite sufficient, but it sometimes happened

that some particularly pains-taking learner declared she had misgivings respecting some particular dish, in that case she was allowed to come again and see it. After both teachers and learners were satisfied, the latter used to be examined in their proficiency and receive a certificate.

Still, satisfactory as all this was, great as had been the need of such a place of instruction, and eager as was the rush of pupils to its doors, I declare again that we have not yet attained, no, nor hardly touched, the object nearest to our hearts, or reached the class we really wish to teach.



IV.

The Future of the School.

IN the last chapter I gave my readers a short sketch of the section of the National Training School of Cookery as it was during the first months of its existence. To that account there is little to add, except the statement that the numbers of would-be pupils increased so enormously that it would have required monster premises indeed to accommodate them. The consequence was that applicants were turned away day after day, disconsolate and disheartened, for it is often their only chance of taking lessons to take them at once, and alas, there was not a spare corner for weeks and weeks to come! Nor did the autumn show any signs of falling off in our numbers. Ladies who were tolerably certain of their movements, secured places for their cooks to learn whilst they themselves should be out of town; and whole classes from young ladies'

schools inscribed their names in the entrance list. So did lodging-house keepers, who lamented that they did not know of the school, or rather that the school did not know of *them*, till lately, and who consoled their complaining lodgers by assurances that "please goodness it'll be *very* different next year!" Whether the lodgers contrive to stave off dyspepsia and distaste for ill-cooked food *until* next year, is another question, the answer to which I have not heard. One absurd phase of the movement was the sudden clamour men began to make for their rights—their cooking-rights, I mean! They constantly came to my office and entreated to be taken as pupils, alleging that they were often in circumstances where a knowledge of the elements and principles of cooking would be of incalculable use and benefit to them, and that they ought to be able to learn. This proposition I do not at all gainsay, for my poor supplicants comprised intending gentlemen emigrants, travellers, curates, explorers, yachtsmen, even soldiers and sailors. It does not require much reflection to perceive that it would be of immense use to these men to know how to make the most of out-of-the-way food-material; but all I would impress on them is—that *my* hands are full, and that they must get

up a training-school for themselves, for the success of which they have my very best wishes.

But I must not be allured into filling my chapter with details of our success, or stories of our crowded classes, or triumphant assurances, such as—"I came to you a bad cook 'm, and I'm going away a good one" (which statement I devoutly hope is true), for my province and intention is rather to dwell on the more important part of the scheme of the Executive Committee. It is not yet matured, for, like most schemes in the world, its development must depend on its pecuniary resources. So far as the *second* branch—the branch I have already described—has gone, it paid, and showed every sign of continuing to pay its own way entirely. Every week the accounts and wages were paid and all debts discharged, and every week a handsome surplus used to be paid into the bank. These funds accrued to us from the extremely moderate fees paid by the pupils (£2 2s. for nearly a month's instruction) and the sale of the surplus food after the deputy housekeeper, cooks, and scullery-maids had had their daily meals. We do not therefore require or desire to ask the public for sixpence towards carrying out *this* branch of the scheme. It is only for the instructors that we

want money. These instructors are to be recruited from the most intelligent class of young women whom we can attract to our stoves,—young women who are capable of learning the art of cooking food in a way which shall be at once palatable, wholesome, and economical, and not only of learning this art themselves, but of teaching it to others. That is to be the difference between instructors and learners. The instructors learn entirely to teach others under our supervision, to form a nucleus material for starting training schools all over the country. The learners on the other hand merely come to learn, and go their own way afterwards. Now we propose to give these instructors their culinary education on the lowest possible terms, but we exact from them in return a formal promise that for a certain time they shall remain on our staff, and hold themselves in readiness to start at a moment's notice for any place where they may be required to go. We have at this moment applications from most of the great manufacturing towns, from country villages, from charitable institutions where girls are brought up to be useful members of society, and they all tell the same story: "We *cannot* go to you, but we wish you to come to us, and are willing to pay all reasonable expenses at-

tending your doing so." Up to the present time we have not been able to answer any of these earnest entreaties for simple lack of instructors, but our hope and belief is that in the course of a year this portion of the scheme will be so thoroughly matured that, in answer to such a demand, we shall be in a position to send down an instructor, a demonstrator (that is to say, a trained cook who will show in practice what the instructor speaks of in theory) and a scullery-maid, perhaps even a little portable apparatus for cooking which could be set up in any hall or shed in the place.

It is, I hope, needless to say that it is not proposed to teach the instructors the same sort of cookery as the learners—nor indeed ought they to be taught at the same time or place. The course of instruction would extend over some eight or ten weeks—longer if necessary—and the fee for such instruction is to be fixed as low as is practicable. This fee may be paid either by the students or by donors or subscribers to the funds of the school, who, singly or jointly, may nominate students to enter the school in proportion to the value of their subscriptions. For instance, a life member giving £100 may nominate two eligible students every year for


life, and an annual subscriber of £5 may nominate one student in each year. Five donors of £1 each may unite together and nominate one student each year they pay their donation. The would-be instructors should not be under twenty or over thirty years of age, and should be able to write from dictation, and cast up and keep accounts. Instead of teaching an instructor how to make puff paste or omelettes, how to lard a sweetbread or clear soup, she would need to be carefully drilled in the homelier arts of making bread, of roasting, boiling, stewing, and frying, with the commonest materials and the fewest possible kitchen utensils. She would be taught how to make a good and savoury use of Australian meat, to bake cakes with dripping, and turn odds and ends of meat into a wholesome and delicious stew or broth. The value of herbs and common vegetables to eke out a scanty meal should be patent to her, and she should be prepared to familiarise the poor, hard-worked materfamilias of the working classes with many a cheap and savoury substitute for preparations of food which has grown sadly costly these few last years.

This, when briefly and roughly sketched, is the culinary Utopia which the Executive Com-

mittee of the National Training School for Cooking have in their mind's eye,—a day when they shall be able to send forth intelligent and trained instructors to every parish in England, and when these instructors will find an audience ready and willing to profit by their teachings. But there is much to be done first; not only have the instructors to be found, and the competent sifted from the incompetent, but a home has to be provided for the instructors out of the funds which may be forthcoming from subscriptions or donations. Of course it need only be a very simple and unpretending dwelling, but still there must be some sort of a place to which, after her six hours of instruction at the Training School, the student can return and feel that she is beneath a respectable shelter. The more exactly the girl is the sort of girl we want to get hold of to teach, the more she combines all our requirements, the less likely are her parents or friends to permit her to come up to London and live by herself in a lodging without companions or protection in her leisure or *her* "Evening Hours."

V.

Pastry.

 FEW days ago the crowded classroom at this same School of Cookery was honoured by a visit from a professional *cordon bleu*, an elegant individual who condescends—for wages which considerably exceed the full pay of a captain in the army—to superintend the repasts of a certain cabinet minister. This culinary artiste was of a somewhat dreamy and poetical turn of mind, so I did not find his opinions on our mode of teaching of much practical value. He confided to me, with a profound sigh, that he and his master arranged between them those exquisite little dinners,—dinners so *répandue* for their elegance and variety; “as for Miladi,”—he regretted profoundly to say it,—“her ladyship preferred such common-place things as pictures and statues, and he really believed”—this with an inimitable shrug and

gesture of despair—"the so misguided madame would rather listen to a concert any day than partake of a *hors d'œuvre*, suggested perhaps by his lordship, but carried out and developed by himself."

I suppose that I managed to look sufficiently grieved and shocked at this revelation of Miladi's depraved tastes; for, about a week afterwards, M. Casserole entered my office, spruce and smart as ever, and laid a large paper packet on my table with a profound bow.

"What is this?" I inquired.

"A state-paper on pastry, madame," he replied; bowed once more, and withdrew.

I confess it was with feelings approaching to awe that I unfolded the document which embodied M. Casserole's sentiments on the noble art of making pastry. I will spare my readers a repetition of the pompous phraseology and diplomatic *tours de phrases* in which his opinions were couched, and proceed to briefly engraft his theories upon our practice.

Pastry proper, then, may be said to be divided into only two parts,—puff paste, which is the most expensive and elegant form of pastry, and short paste. Nothing is more rare than to find really perfect puff paste in a middle class family,

and yet it only requires care and delicacy of touch. In proof of its not being difficult to learn how to make good puff paste, I may mention that the pupils at the National School of Cookery, after having the whole process minutely explained to them, and seeing it once made, have often gone home and made puff paste as light and flaky as M. Casserole's own *pâtés*. The process is rather a long one, and cannot be hurried; besides which, it must be borne in mind that in hot weather it is useless to attempt to make puff paste without a couple of pounds of ice in a basin and another pound of ice on a marble slab (which is better than a pasteboard) to keep the surface of the marble as cool as possible, when the pastry is not actually on it. Of course, during the short interval of rolling out the paste the ice must be removed from the slab and the water wiped off. A good cook will also be careful to make her pastry early in the day, before she and her kitchen get hot, and whilst she has leisure for the process. Anything like flurry and fuss is fatal to light puff paste.

The first thing to be done is to take a pound of the very finest and best wheaten flour into which a couple of ounces of perfectly fresh

butter must be lightly worked (a pound of butter is to go in altogether, but you must only begin with two ounces). A pinch of salt may then be added, and a table-spoonful of lemon juice, but even this must be poured in in driblets, not coarsely dashed in at once. Beat up lightly and slightly the yolk of an egg in a breakfast cup with a gill and a half of water, not giving the final rapid whisks until all the water is in. Add the contents of the cup to the flour on the slab, but work it in with a knife, so as to avoid touching the pastry more than you can help. If the weather be hot, it would be a good thing now to plunge your hands into ice-cold water for a moment and dry them thoroughly before attempting to knead the flour up, as lightly as you can touch it, and only using the extreme tips of your fingers. The pastry-maker must always remember that the better and finer and purer her flour is, the more moisture it will absorb, and if this proportion of water be not enough to give you a smooth paste, as even as possible, then a very little more water must be cautiously added. The rolling-pin may now be taken up, having first dipped it in flour, and the paste rolled once or twice at the most, to the thickness of the eighth of an inch. This is quite

enough for the first rolling of puff-paste, as nothing makes it so heavy as too much kneading or rolling. Place in the middle of the smooth layer all the remainder of the butter, and fold the sheet of pastry up as if it were a napkin. Roll it lightly but firmly and swiftly once more (never forgetting to flour your rolling-pin *well* each time) and lay it aside for seven minutes. If it is cold weather the precious paste need only be moved into a cool place; but if it be hot weather, everything depends on the pastry being kept cold between the magic turns. It should be lightly laid between the folds of a clean napkin, so as to avoid the necessity of touching it with the hand, and placed on a dish, which dish should stand on a bason full of ice in the coolest spot in the house. Five times over must this process be repeated; that is to say the paste placed on the marble slab (which has been kept cold and dry, and is lightly dashed with flour to receive it) rolled out once or twice, folded away in the napkin and laid aside for seven minutes, so that it takes nearly a couple of hours to make really light and good puff paste. When the last turn has been given, the paste should be perfectly smooth and even, and of a rich cream colour, suggestive of lightness.

It can be used for savoury pâtés, for mince pies, for tartlet cases, for cheese biscuits and straws—with the addition of a little grated Parmesan cheese and a pinch of cayenne pepper—for a hundred other dishes, which are delicious where the pastry is light and flaky, and odious where it is sodden and heavy. I do not here dwell on the oven, which must not be too hot so as to scorch the delicate paste, nor too cold to “sadden” it, as the cooks say.

Short pastry is cheaper and more easily made, and does not need fresh butter. Not only can salt butter be used for short paste, but even lard and clarified dripping, though these two ingredients are not so safe in the hands of a beginner. It need not be rolled so often, nor laid aside, nor does it absolutely require to be kept so cool, although all pastry is the better for being made in a low temperature. A pound of flour would only need half a pound of salt butter, or even a quarter of a pound of butter and a quarter of a pound of lard or clarified dripping. The butter may at once be worked into the flour with the hands until it can be crumbled like bread, and then the yolk of an egg beat up with a gill or so of milk must be gradually added. This will make, after a few

turns with the rolling-pin, a nice smooth paste suitable for fruit tarts, meat pies, those little mutton pies which are so economical to enclose little shreds and minced scraps of meat, and every dish which needs a lid or case of pastry.

Suet paste is to be boiled (*never* baked), and is made by using finely-chopped suet instead of butter or lard with the flour, in equal proportions,—say half a pound of each; a pinch of salt and a little water are the only other ingredients. The paste thus made is either rolled up into little dumplings, or if it is to be used for boiled meat, fruit, or jam puddings, rolled out to the thickness of a quarter of an inch. Sometimes an apple, previously cored and sugared, is wrapped up in this suet paste, and either boiled or baked, but the former process is much the most economical and wholesome. Suet paste should boil rather quickly if it is to be light, and dumplings should be kept apart by frequent stirs with a wooden spoon, else they will join themselves together in the pot.



VI.

Different Cheap Dishes.

THE monotony of English middle-class food must strike every one who knows anything of the cooking arrangements of other nations, with astonishment and dismay. Here is an island which, taking it altogether, may fairly be said to produce food of better quality and more abundant quantity than any other area of inhabited land on the face of the globe, and its inhabitants are more indifferently and stupidly fed than those of any other country! Whose fault is that? Their own, most emphatically.

There are more excuses to be made for the detestable food of the very poor, because it cannot be so easy to cook decently with a squalling baby in one's arms, a week's wash on one's mind, and an empty purse in one's pocket. But even here there is great room for improvement, and the subject is now attracting so much

attention that we may fairly look for the dawn of brighter culinary days in cottages. For the moment my indignation burns more fiercely against those incapable mothers of families who give their husbands cold mutton, and their children rice pudding, every day of their lives, "because the cook has so much to do, poor thing, and they know nothing about cooking themselves!" Why should not they vary the monotony of their food with something of this sort?—I am sure it is cheap enough. Get a dozen sheep's feet from the butcher, and make him extract the long bone from each; clean them well; put a quarter of a pound of beef or mutton suet in a stew-pan, with two onions and a carrot, sliced, two bay leaves, two sprigs of thyme, one ounce of salt, a quarter of an ounce of pepper; put it on the fire and cook for five minutes; add two table-spoonfuls of flour, and turn it round; then two quarts and a half of water (or still better, stock, of which earnest mention is made in cooking for the poor, chap. x). The feet should now be put in, stirred till the liquid boils, and then allowed to simmer for three hours, or even longer if the feet should not become perfectly tender. When this desirable result has been attained take them out with a large spoon

and fork, and lay them on a sieve. Take a quarter of a pound of fresh butter (clarified dripping will do just as well), a little salt, flour, and pepper, a little (*very* little) grated nutmeg, and the juice of a small lemon; mix all these ingredients well together on a plate with the back of a spoon, and put the feet, with a gill of milk, in a stew-pan on the fire; when very hot put in the butter, stir continually till melted. But before you do this you must have beaten up the yolks of a couple of eggs with five table-spoonfuls of milk, which put in the stew-pan, keep moving the stew-pan round over the fire continually for one minute, serve in a very hot dish, with *croûtons* of fried bread, cut in triangular pieces, and arranged nicely round the dish.

Don't throw away the liquid in which they have been boiled on any account, it would do beautifully for cabbage soup, which is thus easily made. Take a couple of summer cabbages. Remove the outside leaves, cut them into quarters, put them in a saucepan with a good-sized piece of bacon cut into slices an inch wide, down to the skin, which (it must be *clean*, remember, however) may be left intact and easily cut through with the ladle when helping the soup. Of course the rind, or outer skin of the bacon, could be

cut off as usual first, but it is more economical to put it in the soup, so long as it is not made the means of adding any dirt to the receipt. A little bag may be put in also, containing sweet herbs, a clove of garlic, and a little spice. Season also with a little pepper and salt, but remember the bacon is salt, and be wary. Now, pour in enough of your stock from the sheep's feet, etc. (it ought to be a day old, so as to allow the scum to rise to the top and be removed), and then let the soup simmer till the cabbages are quite done. A few bits of bread served in it are nice, but a penny French roll is much better, with bits of the crust stamped out by a tin cutter to look like ratifias, and dropped in at the last moment.

Then there is Devonshire junket. Even in London this is not a very costly variation to the daily rice pudding, and in the country it is about as cheap a dish, if you keep a cow, as the heart of a housekeeper can desire. I used to make it many a time and oft in New Zealand, and I assure you a back-country station is not remarkable for the variety of its supplies. If it could be managed, where a dray from Christchurch penetrated about twice a year with groceries, I should think it might be made any-

where. Of course the milk depended on the cows being in an amiable, stay-at-home, mood. If they had made up their minds to cross the river, or the nearest range, it was of no use thinking of Devonshire junket! Here is the way I made it, and judging by the rapidity with which it disappeared after its arrival at table, it could not have been so bad.

Take a quart of new milk, and put it in whatever dish you mean it to be served in; of course a deep glass or silver dish looks best, but I have known it to taste excellent out of a vegetable dish, or, for that matter, out of a *soup tureen*! The objection to this method is that the milk does not heat so easily, for it must be placed on the top of the oven or boiler or stove (only at the top, *outside*, remember) and allowed to get gradually warm through to as nearly as possible the temperature of new milk. But the first thing to be done after you pour your quart of milk into the dish for it, is to add some rennet. I was obliged to use prepared rennet from a chemist's, which answered exceedingly well, but in a dairy farm, where cheese is made, or in the country, a small piece of dried rennet could easily be procured. It looks exactly like a bit of tripe, and only needs to be well washed and

soaked in tepid water for a short time before you put it in the milk. Add also a little sugar to taste, a tablespoonful of rum or brandy (rum is best) a tiny pinch of grated lemon peel or essence of lemon, or a drop or two of vanille if you chance to have any. Let all these things warm together with the milk until a fine curd has begun to form, and then remove the dish from the fire and lay it aside to *set* and cool. If you use prepared rennet, be careful not to put too much, especially if it be a new bottle. People seldom make allowance for the strength of the contents of a newly opened bottle, and you should be cautious with essences to use *very* little the first time the cork is taken out. After that a good deal of the subtle flavour evaporates, and they may be dropped in with a freer hand, but always restrain yourself with a new bottle of anything. If the rennet itself has been used, take it out of the milk when you remove the dish from the top of the fire. I always used to lay a plate or flat dish over mine, for fear of any stray flakes of soot floating down to it. As soon as it is quite cold, it is ready for use, and you can either add a spoonful or two of plain cream, poured over the top, or whipped cream dashed on in fine, bold lumps (that was what I


did, for cream was plenty) or Devonshire cream in a thick even layer of perfect smoothness and delicious taste.

Perhaps it is tantalising to allude to this delicacy, and not describe briefly the perfectly easy and simple way in which it is made.

Strain the new milk into a tin milk pan, and set it on the top of a moderately warm stone or hot plate. The milk must never boil, or approach boiling. Indeed it should not smoke, but in a couple of hours a thick solid cream will rise to the surface, and then the pan should be at once removed to a cool place. Great care is necessary to prevent any flavour of smoke being attracted to the milk, and remaining with the cream. I had a Devonshire dairymaid who used tin lids, fitting close to her milk pans, but with her successors it became necessary to discard the lids, because they simply *boiled* the milk, alleging they could not watch it, or test the warmth, if the vessel were not uncovered. When I had a junket, and intended to use Devonshire cream with it, I always skimmed it off a fresh pan, so as to have the cream sweet and smooth, and even.

VII.

Australian Meat.

MONG the various questions which are frequently asked me by means of the penny post, is a demand to know my private and candid opinion about the merits and demerits of Australian meat. The writers always volunteer their own sentiments on the subject. And I am amused to see that, whilst they evidently don't like the taste of meat out of a tin, they never give *that* as the real reason; but base their objections on the score of fear of its being unwholesome, innutritious, and possessing all sorts of bad qualities. After the question to me, and the statement of their own opinions, my correspondents on this subject almost invariably proceed to implore me in pathetic and moving terms to tell them of some recipe by which they can produce out of their tin a dish as palatable and wholesome as if it were made of

meat fresh from a butcher's shop. Wholesome? Yes! Palatable? No!

So far as my own individual experience goes, I have no hesitation in saying that no method of cooking with which I am acquainted can ever make Australian meat, as it reaches us at present, as nice to the palate as fresh meat. But it certainly is as wholesome; for although the actual fibres of the meat may not contain the same amount of nutriment, the gelatinous mass in which it is embedded is unusually rich in flesh-forming properties. Nor do I find any objection to its digestibility. It is not a thing one would offer to an invalid just recovering from gastric fever, or to a person suffering from indigestion; but for people in sound health, and especially for those who labour in the open air, there is no doubt that Australian meat is a great boon. I have seen the miners of some of the Staffordshire coal-pits making a hearty breakfast or supper from the unwarmed contents of a tin of preserved beef or mutton, and they have assured me with a grin of delight that they found it "uncommon satisfying, as well as toothsome." To such people it is an untold comfort; and also to sailors and soldiers on a pinch; and it assists most liberally the dietary of many of our

charitable and reformatory institutions. Sailors especially are grateful for it, as it affords a blessed change to the monotonous and scurvy-producing salt junk of former days. Now, what with tins of Australian meat, and packets of preserved vegetables, and a plentiful supply of lime juice, scurvy is fast dying out as a disease inseparable from long voyages.

But there is still a large class of would-be preserved meat consumers who cannot get either servants or children to partake of the contents of the tins with readiness and appetite. To those anxious mothers who ardently desire to feed their growing rapacious children with a food at once economical and wholesome, these half-crown tins are, if the truth were told, somewhat of a snare and a delusion. Of course, there is the prejudice inseparable from ignorance on the part of the cook, who is sure to disdain to lend any assistance towards taking a step in the direction of economy or reform. If the mistress of a small establishment, taking her courage in both her hands, tenders a tin of preserved meat to her general servant as the *pièce de resistance* for the family meal, the chances are that that functionary will take an unamiable pleasure in serving up the very nastiest compound imagi-

nable, with the result of preventing a repetition of the indignity. If these tins of meat are to be the staple nourishment of the house, what becomes of her beloved perquisites, her "coarse grease," her dripping, bones, pig-tub, and so forth?

If, therefore, any use is to be made of the preserved meat as it now reaches us, the mistresses will have to superintend its preparation; and this is one way of making preserved beef into very palatable soup. Place the tin in a saucepan full of boiling water, having previously taken off the lid very neatly with a knife sold for the purpose; in a few minutes the fat and the jelly will be quite melted; each piece of meat should then be removed with a fork, and rinsed, as it were, by pouring a little hot water over it into the tin. When it is all removed the tin should be filled to the top with hot water, the contents well stirred, and afterwards strained into a basin. So far the process of soup making has occupied but a few minutes. The basin should then be set aside to cool, and when it has thrown up a thick scum of fat it is time to go on with the soup. Skim off every particle of fat, and pour the liquid into a saucepan. Add a couple of carrots finely shredded, half of a small onion, a

little chopped parsley, celery, and sweet herbs, with the usual flavouring of pepper and salt, and a pinch of sugar. Let it all simmer slowly for a couple of hours, strain, and serve, and the result ought to be a tureen full of excellent soup. But if we come to analyze the cost very closely, I doubt whether much will have been saved, for half the quantity of soup meat to the same proportion of water would have produced equally good and nutritious soup. The great gain is in time and trouble, as three hours will have been ample to prepare such a soup, whereas with fresh meat it would need to have been made the day before. In both cases the meat left is devoid of nourishment, and could not be depended upon as a force-giving meal, though it might be served afterwards with vegetables and a little of the soup, thickened, for gravy, as a *bouilli*. It may be palatable, and it may satisfy hunger, but it is not of the same nutritive value as half a pound of fresh meat with the juices in it.

Now we will suppose that we have a 4-lb. tin of Australian mutton, which we wish to convert into a stew. Take the meat out of the tin, scrape off the fat and jelly (which is really the gravy), put the gravy into a stew-pan with a

small onion (which should previously have been lightly fried in the fat you have scraped off), a sliced turnip and carrot, a very little water, and the usual seasoning. Let all this simmer slowly for half an hour or so, until the vegetables are cooked. Then put in the pieces of mutton just as they are, a few potatoes, ready boiled, and plunge the saucepan into another larger one, full of boiling water. Put both lids tightly on, and in less than ten minutes the mutton will be thoroughly heated, and you can serve up a tender, savoury stew. I think myself this is the most economical way of using Australian mutton, and the most savoury of the re-cooked preparations. For my own part I prefer the beef turned out of the tin (which is easily effected by putting it in a saucepan of hot water for a minute just to loosen the edges), and eaten cold like spiced or pressed beef, which it much resembles. One of my chief objections to Australian meat is that its cooks consider it necessary to smother it in onions. Once when I remonstrated on this point, I was met by the assurance that it was necessary, to disguise the flavour of the tin! There are small tins of preserved ox-tails, which are very cheap, and which really make excellent ox-tail soup at a pinch; but

great care should always be taken in serving up anything out of a tin, to avoid the little pellets of tin which may find their way inside the case during the first stage of soldering. If the liquid is properly strained before it is served, of course this cannot happen ; and in any case they sink to the bottom of the tureen, and are not likely to be helped. Still, it is as well to take every precaution, on account of a slight possible danger to old people or children.



VIII.

Disguises for Mutton.

WHEN I lived in New Zealand, the first object of a housewife's ambition used to be to disguise, as much as possible, the perpetual mutton of which her bill of fare was sure to be composed—at all events, at a station. At a *new* station, as ours was, no one would dream of killing chickens for the first year or two after the poultry-yard had been established. They were rare and precious birds, and a source of great anxiety to the amateur hen-wife, who would as soon have thought of ordering a child as a chicken, for dinner. The hawks and the rats ate the feathered babies, the creeks came down and washed the nests away, and flooded the poultry-yard, and the few survivors of these catastrophes were needed to preserve the race from utter extinction, and to keep the household in eggs. Oh, the experiments I used to try on

my surplus summer eggs, from recipes taken out of the hundred-and-one cookery books I possessed! And how any shepherd up a gully knew far better than the people who wrote the books how to keep eggs fresh and fit for use for many months! I packed them in lime, I mutton-fatted them (for butter was far too precious to use on egg-experiments), but the winter always found me egg-less, and trying desperately to do without them by means of egg-powder and all sorts of condiments. Ducks and pigeons were equally out of the question for the same reasons, and it was only just as we were leaving, after three years, that pigeon-pies, ducklings,—green peas we always had, though we were compelled to cultivate only the dwarf variety, on account of the Nor'-Westers,—and chickens were daily delicacies.

So, up to that time, my thoughts by day, and my dreams by night, turned on how to disguise the mutton which had to appear at three meals every day all the year round. I must gratefully acknowledge that I picked up hints on this important subject from every house where I visited, for all my neighbours had once gone through the same anxieties, and were always anxious to impart their discoveries to the "new chum." At

a comfortable station "up north," I learned how good a substitute for deers' marrow bones, boiled and served hot in a napkin, at breakfast, can be found in sheeps' bones similarly served. Also that a curry of mutton is not to be surpassed; and that aspic-jelly can be made from strong mutton soup (we thought nothing of using a couple of legs of mutton for the purpose) only it requires to be slightly stiffened with gelatine, if it is to turn out properly. I think it was at the same place that one day at luncheon, when one of the covers was taken off, we all believed a culinary miracle had been worked, and that a genuine English rump-steak had found its way into our host's larder. But it turned out to be only a thick slice from the large end of a leg of mutton. The cook had waited until a bigger leg than usual had been sent in from the butcher's "shop," as it used to be called in pleasant irony,—a place where neither buying nor selling went on,—and she had sawn through the bone, cut her slice exactly the shape of a steak, rubbed a young onion over it, broiled it to a turn over a clear wood fire, and served with a thick paste of butter, flour, and chopped parsley laid on it the last moment, and a garnish of potato chips. The illusion both to smell,

sight, and taste, was complete, and I for one would not believe it to be anything less than a beef-steak.

The chief difficulty, if we wanted to "make believe" very much about our incessant mutton, consisted in the small size of the joints. Merino mutton is exceedingly small, *short* to the taste, rather lean, and of a dark colour, of a most exquisite game-like flavour, but extremely delicate at the same time.

There are traditions still in existence, handed down from the remote primeval days of nearly a quarter of a century ago, that station cooks used to send in a roast leg of mutton to the "boss" for his breakfast, another for his dinner, and a third for his supper, and that this bill of fare would be repeated from one shearing to the other. But by the time I knew that happy Arcadia, we shepherds and shepherdesses were let off with mutton chops for breakfast, roast leg of mutton for dinner, and baked shoulder of mutton for supper. That was supposed to be variety enough to satisfy the most inveterate *gourmet*.

I found that a welcome variety could be made by stewing a shoulder of mutton slowly, with rice, sultana raisins, a pinch of powdered spice, and a *bouquet garni* of sweet herbs. It used

to be served like a pillau, covered with the savoury rice, but the liquid had to be strained off, or it would have looked too much like soup in the dish. Then we ventured on haricot, which was very popular, as, the mutton not being fat, the dish never turned out greasy, and we had lots of excellent vegetables in the garden, such as peas and haricot beans. A leg of mutton, boned and stuffed with veal-stuffing, "made believe" to be something quite different; but nothing ever came up to the "pressed beef," which I learned to make out of mutton flaps, at a station "down south."

Here is the receipt; but I must first state I had the most stupendous difficulty in getting the shepherd who acted as butcher to save the flaps for me. Never, since he came to that country of mutton, had he been asked to do such a thing! As his keen knife rapidly trimmed the joints, he was in the habit of flinging these flaps,—the skinny ends of each loin of mutton,—to his dogs, who considered them their lawful perquisites. It took me the best part of a month of mingled cajolery and insistence to induce Pepper to save the flaps for me. When I had two legs and two loins of mutton sent into the house every day, what in all the world could I

want with *flaps*? Well, at last I got them, five or six in number, and they were immediately plunged into a bath of "wet pickle" as it is technically called,—a crafty mixture of sugar and spice, salt and saltpetre, and a due proportion of water. In this bath the flaps remained for a week, being turned carefully by means of a fork every day. At the end of that time they were taken out, placed symmetrically one on the top of the other with a layer of spice, powdered herbs, a *soupeçon* of a spring onion, a little pepper, and sometimes a pinch of curry powder (but that was a bold dash of my own), tied together in the shape of a large brick by means of stout string, and slowly boiled the best part of a day. Then the mass, still tied up like a parcel, was laid on a clean board, a board placed at the top, and the heaviest weights in the house placed on the top of the board. The strings were now artfully snipped but not removed, and by the morning there was a solid brick of spiced mutton flaps, which only needed to be pared into a symmetrical shape (the string having been quite taken away) and served with a garnish of curled parsley or freshly-gathered watercresses, to make the most deceiving and palatable diet at breakfast. Of course we ate it cold, with French

mustard, and it never was considered dereliction from severe truth to ask for a "little more of that capital spiced beef." Alas, it invariably disappeared with frightful rapidity, and in my cross moments I used to declare that I intended to return to the leg-of-mutton breakfasts, for nothing less substantial was of any use as a *pièce de résistance* against youthful appetites sharpened by mountain air.



IX.

Sick-room Cooking.

THE first point I always endeavour to ascertain when a new cook comes to me, is, what ideas she possesses on the subject of sick-room cookery. Generally these ideas are of the vaguest and most shadowy nature, and she hastens to supplement her bald and sketchy programme by assurances that she never thinks of trouble where sick people's comfort is concerned. This statement is doubtless perfectly true, but at the same time it would hardly do to trust entirely to the cook's kind heart and good nature when a sick person's diet is in question. I have seen a good deal of sickness; and I can safely affirm that proper food, properly prepared, makes all the difference between rapid convalescence and a retarded recovery: nay, between life and death.

The first thing we must bear in mind, is, that

beef tea ; and the result the next day—for this sort of beef tea should always be twenty-four hours old—is a clear, solid mass, the colour of brown sherry, and, until it is melted, the consistency of jelly. Many people can take a few spoonfuls of this substance cold ; but if it be warmed, not a single drop of water should be added to it. There are besides many valuable broths made out of mutton, chicken, veal, rabbit, and so forth, and the principle is the same in all,—very little water, and long careful simmering for a whole day before they are used. Maccaroni or vermicelli boiled in beef tea adds greatly to its nutritive value, even if it be removed before the patient drinks the liquid.

But after the stage of broths is passed there often comes a short time before the patient is promoted to actual meat, when the nurse and the cook are at their wits' ends to know how to vary the bill of fare, and yet keep within the narrow bounds of what an enfeebled digestion can manage. It is at this stage that panadas, savoury creams, meat jellies, and so forth are invaluable. Here is a receipt for a *crème d'orge* which I have often used, and which I never knew a sick person refuse to eat, if he were capable of eating anything at all.—A pound of veal, without

either skin or fat, and an ounce of pearl barley, boiled slowly together, with a quart of water to start with, which should gradually be reduced to a pint; then the whole must be poured into a fine tammy sieve, and the barley and meat rubbed through the tammy after the liquor has been strained off. This will make the broth into the consistency of cream; and a pinch of salt should be added. In some cases a table-spoonful of fresh sweet cream beaten up with the mixture is a great improvement; but this depends on the nature of the patient's disorder, and the barley and veal broth is almost as nice without it.

Then there are panadas of chicken or beef, prepared in the following way.—Cut up a couple of pounds of juicy rump-steak, or a whole fowl, or a pheasant, and put it in a large jam-pot. Cover this with paper (in which a few holes must be pricked with a fork) and place it in a saucepan half-full of cold water, which should come nearly up to the top of the jam-pot, but on no account to cover it. Then fit the lid of the saucepan very tightly on, and let it simmer quietly all day. Pour off the small quantity of liquid which will have been extracted from the meat, and let it stand for the film of fat to rise and be removed. Take the meat which remains,—either

the beef, game, or chicken,—and pound it in a pestle with a mortar whilst it is warm, and run it through a fine sieve into the liquid, adding a little salt, and *very* delicate flavouring of herbs or lemon-peeling. The result will be a delicious panada, about the consistency of smooth arrow-root; which is not only exceedingly palatable and easy to swallow, but is invaluable to a feeble stomach, for by this method the food is offered to it already *digested*, so it has nothing to do but assimilate it.

I must here say a word about the fallacy of giving sick people *starch* as nourishment. Many kind nurses triumphantly proclaim that their patient has swallowed so many spoonfuls of arrowroot, or corn-flour, or some substance of that sort made with boiling water. He might just as well have swallowed so much cold water in point of nourishment, and he had much better have taken half the quantity of milk. When people are well, or when they need only to make flesh, then these starchy components are harmless and agreeable enough, and form a very good vehicle in which to take wine, or brandy, or milk; but it is terribly dangerous to trust to them when nothing should be swallowed which does not either possess—as do the panadas—a real

nutritive value from the actual fibrine swallowed, or the wonderful and assimilative properties of strong beef tea. *Over-feeding* is as bad for a sick person as under-feeding; perhaps, indeed, it is the worse evil of the two; and above all, there should be no discussion or allusion to food in any way. At the proper hour the right form of nourishment, perfectly prepared and prettily served, should be offered without any fuss; and if the patient seems to have a strong dislike to it, then something else should be substituted in a short time. I have known a typhoid case recover entirely on a self-prescribed milk diet, when half-a-dozen doctors were declaring that stimulants were absolutely necessary. Of course stimulants should be given when prescribed; but it is quite possible to do without them, if the diet is very nutritious and the patient has a strong aversion to the smell or taste of alcohol in any form. Such warnings are never to be disregarded, and an intelligent nurse can always discriminate between a sick person's fancies and their instincts.

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X.

Cooking for the Poor.

HALF these chapters have been taken up by culinary chit-chat referring to dishes or cooking which may and ought to be found in middle-class kitchens. I propose in this chapter to see what can be done within a small compass towards improving our minds on the subject of cookery for the poor. This, I need not say, is a very large class, and embraces many unsuspected thousands. There are hundreds and hundreds of men of education and ability, who wear a decent coat, and can express their opinions in good English, who, from no fault of their own, find a daily difficulty in providing food for the mouths they have to fill. It is becoming more apparent every year that this difficulty increases instead of diminishing, and yet it is equally plain that it is not without a remedy. Ignorance of the true economy of

food is at the bottom of it all,—ignorance and prejudice. There is, an idea of respectability and solvency attached to big joints of the most wasteful and expensive parts of the butchered animal which it will take a long time yet to overcome. I shall make it my business in this paper to point a few ways of using up scraps and odds and ends of food which are generally wasted, or else served up in such a manner as to excite suspicion and disgust rather than appetite.

First of all, let me say that no family who can afford a kitchen at all, is too poor to be without a stock-pot. I often think, as I drive through the suburbs of this great city, and see the rows upon rows of small terraces and streets, how more than probable it is that the kitchen and the cooking is the weak point of each small establishment. Most of the people who live in such places must earn or possess at least a couple of hundreds a year; their houses are scrupulously clean and monotonously neat, so far as a passer-by can judge. I see clean door-steps and nice white muslin curtains, and a bright table cover, and a few pots of flowers. I see all these things, but I often wonder how many stock-pots there are in the little kitchens all along that row of houses. Probably not one.

A real, proper stock-pot should be a large earthenware pipkin, and it should by rights stand in an iron pot full of water, but an ordinary large iron saucepan would do very well. Into this every bone, every odd and end of fat, or skin, or gristle should go. Everything can be washed before it is put in, for there is nothing but dirt which is unwholesome. Well-washed outer leaves of cabbages or lettuces, crusts of bread, odds and ends of vegetables. All can go in. If the bill of fare run short, or a hungry school-boy turns up unexpectedly, there is always a possibility of a warm wholesome meal out of the stock-pot, at a moment's notice, and the liquid part of it is an immense addition to all dishes. Take "Don Pedro Pie," for instance, and see,—perhaps I ought to say smell or taste,—what a difference stock would make instead of water. Here is the receipt of the "Don Pedro Pie" we use at the School of Cookery, the foundation of which receipt be it gratefully acknowledged, came from the *Queen* newspaper:—

First of all a tin dish must be procured (and no small and economical family should be without one). The dish I mean can be procured at any ironmonger's, and is like a deep, oval cake

tin, and has a cover which fits in an inch or so lower than the rim. This cover is perforated with small holes and has a handle to lift it off by, and a diminutive funnel in the middle by which a certain portion of the savoury steam escapes, and the meat beneath is kept from being soddened. At the bottom of this tin lay slices cut thinly and evenly, but as small as you please, of either cold mutton or beef. A sliced kidney is a great addition, and the smallest remains of any game or poultry. It is astonishing how many shreds may be skilfully got off, when cold, what looks like a bare carcase of a bird, and I am only talking of bits which are actually too small to serve up in any form alone. Now sprinkle a little pepper and salt over the neatly arranged layers of meat, shred an onion finely over them and a pinch of the small leaves of sweet herbs. If there be any sauce, well and good, add a teaspoonful, but I have tasted a very savoury Don Pedro Pie 150 miles away from any possibility of sauce. Fill up the tin with stock or gravy, ever so slightly thickened with flour, put on the tin cover, and fill *that* up with mashed potatoes about an inch thick. Let the pie bake slowly for an hour and a half or two hours. Pin a fish-napkin neatly round

the tin before serving, and have ready a second dish for the potato cover to be placed on.

How seldom one sees a good steak pudding! The paste is generally soppy and uncertain, often tumbling to pieces, whilst the steak inside is as tough as an old shoe and quite as tasteless. I have always wanted to get the exact receipt of that steak pudding which Ruth Pinch made for her brother Tom; for it evidently turned out everything which it ought to have been, and that is more than can be said for most amateur dishes. However, as that particular pudding may have been flavoured by fancy,—we *know* it was eaten by a lover,—we must content ourselves with what Monsieur Soyer has handed down to us as the best formula for producing an irreproachable steak pudding. We must bear in mind that although rump steak is more expensive in price than beef steak, it should always be used except where the necessity for economy is so great that the few extra pence it costs would be an unjustifiable extravagance. The ordinary or common beef steak is so much less juicy, and is nearly always tougher and more difficult to reduce by stewing to a point which is fair to the digestive organs. It is no true economy if the bread-winner of the family has to return to his

work unfit for it, on account of having been fed on indigestible meat. It should also be recollected that men who have to work their brains incessantly, actually require much lighter and better-cooked food than the man who earns his bread by out-door labour. How many a poor clerk's wife, seeing her husband's unremitting, harassing head-work, says, with a sigh, "I wish I could help you, dear!" She *can* help him, by learning how to cook every particle of food she sets before him in the best possible way. In such a house there is not likely to be an accomplished cook; and it is the duty of the wife to know how the food should be prepared, so that she may either do the actual cooking herself, or else teach her little servant how it should be done. But all this is theory. Here is Soyer's practice, so far as steak puddings are concerned.

"Put a pound of flour upon a dresser, with which mix half-a-pound of beef suet, very finely chopped; make a hole in the middle, into which put a tea-spoonful of salt, and sufficient water to form a rather stiffish paste; mix it well together, using a little more flour to dry it and prevent its sticking; then lightly butter the interior of a round-bottomed pudding-basin, roll out two-thirds of the paste to half-an-inch in

thickness, with which line the basin ; have the steak ready, cut into slices about the size of half the palm of the hand, and a quarter-of-an-inch in thickness. There should be two pounds of rump steak altogether, including a little fat. Lay all these slices on a dish, season with two spoonfuls of salt and one of black pepper, sprinkle a little flour over, move them about a little until each piece is well covered with flour and seasoning ; they lay them within the paste, also putting in whatever seasoning may remain upon the dish. Some add two dozen oysters, blanched and bearded, which is excellent.* Pour a gill of water over, moistening the edges of the paste ; then roll out the remainder of the paste to form a lid, which place over, pressing it down with the thumb ; tie the basin up in a pudding cloth, and put it into a saucepan containing about a gallon of boiling water, and keep continually boiling for nearly two hours, adding a little more water occasionally to keep up the quantity ; then take it up, untie the cloth, and run a sharp-pointed knife into the pudding. If the meat feels tender, it is done ; if not, it will require more boiling.

* Ah, Mons. Soyer, oysters are so dear now ! Do not tantalise us with such a suggestion.—Ed.

Turn it over upon your dish, lift the basin carefully from it, and serve without opening the pudding to add gravy, as many persons do, for a pudding made in this way ought to be full of gravy."

This is what M. Soyer says ; but *I* should send the pudding up *in* its basin.



there is going to be a fresh batch of bread baked, and we must take possession of half-a-quartern of the dough which has been lightly kneaded, and would otherwise take its place in the oven as bread. This dough should be put into a basin, a couple of eggs mixed with it (one at a time), a quarter of a pound of sugar, a quarter of a pound of butter (or dripping), a quarter of a pound of Sultana raisins—I *never* give children currants—and a pinch of salt. The raisins should be added last, but all the ingredients ought to be well stirred in. Two more eggs might be added in the same way, that is, one stirred in at a time, just before the raisins. Then butter, or grease a tin mould with good, sweet, clarified dripping, nearly fill it with the mixture, and set it aside in a moderately cool place, as you would bread, to rise. As soon as it has risen sufficiently, put it in a moderate oven to bake until it is of a nice light brown colour, and until you can thrust a knife into it and draw the blade out again undimmed. This is a perfectly wholesome and cheap cake for children's lunch or supper, and will no more harm them than a piece of bread would, whilst it has the appearance and taste of a dainty.

Besides the invariable rice pudding of the

early dinner, there are plenty of cheap and wholesome varieties to be found, for grown-up people would be very sorry themselves to eat as monotonous food as they condemn children to every day. Ground rice boiled in a shape with milk and sugar, and eaten with stewed pears, is a favourite and harmless change, so is batter-pudding and golden syrup, or stewed apples and rice. Maccaroni is not half enough used for children, and it is one of the most valuable forms of food for the due development of the soft little bones. Not only is it very good boiled with milk, and served with little scraps off the cold breast of a chicken,—and it is not difficult to get enough off chicken bones to make a meal for a child if supplemented with maccaroni,—but boiled with milk first, and then put in a pie-dish with more milk, a little sugar and butter, and the beaten-up yolk of an egg, it makes a delicious light pudding.

Biscuits are, or ought to be, always crisper and fresher when made at home from time to time as required; and a clever cook will seize a few spare moments when her oven happens to be as near perfection as possible, and make arrow-root biscuits in the following manner:—She will take eight ounces of flour, eight ounces

of butter (or clarified dripping, or even lard; only, of course, butter is the nicest), six ounces of arrow-root, eight ounces of loaf-sugar, and six eggs. First, she should beat the butter to a cream, add it to the eggs, well whisked, stir in the flour gradually, and beat all thoroughly together. Roll the arrow-root paste, sprinkle on the sugar pounded fine, and mix it well with the other ingredients. Drop the dough from a spoon on a buttered tin, in small pieces,—they will spread themselves naturally into the shape of biscuits,—and bake them in an oven which should not be too hot. I ought to have said before that all mixings of cakes or biscuits should be done with a *wooden* spoon. The eggs must be whisked with a fork, if no proper whisk is at hand, but all the other mixing is better performed with a spoon.

Plain biscuits, such as gentlemen like to eat after dinner with their wine, are made thus:—One pound of flour, half a pint of milk, and two ounces and a half of fresh butter. The milk should be made *warm* (not hot), and the butter dissolved in it. The flour should then be sprinkled in by degrees until it has all been used, by which time a light firm paste will have been produced in the basin where the mixing

has taken place. Then turn it out on a clean paste-board, roll it out thin, cut it into shape with a tin cutter; the rim of a tumbler has been known "up country" to serve as an excellent substitute for a proper cutter. Prick some holes in each with the point of a fork or small skewer, and bake in a nice moderate oven. Half the secret of biscuits and cakes depends on the oven: it must not be *red* hot, yet hot enough. A fierce oven will scorch the outside to a cinder, and leave the inside damp and raw, whilst a slow cold oven will hinder the cake or biscuit from rising, and produce a heavy, sodden, indigestible affair. At the same time, it is impossible for me to give any special recipe for getting an oven to the right temperature. People must be guided by common sense and experience; and there is as much difference in ovens as in the leaves of trees,—no two are alike. Indeed, I *have* known an oven to show temper, and refuse all day to arrive at, or keep at, the desired temperature. A careful cook will always try her oven first, by putting in a little scrap of dough or paste, as big as a walnut, and proving the degree of heat at which her oven stands. A more scientific method is to have a thermometer fixed in the door of the oven, so as to show its

register *outside*, and a little practical experience will soon teach the cook at what height the heat will serve for various purposes.

One sort of general warning may fitly close these random notes. To keep things warm, do not shove the plate of meat into an oven and leave it there. Suppose you have to keep a plate of dinner hot, for even a couple of hours. Set the plate, with its contents, on a saucepan of boiling water, and let *that* stand on the top of the oven or boiler; not on the fire, or even very near it. Of course, the dish should be covered with a close fitting metal cover, and there should either be plenty of gravy on it, or milk, if it be a pudding, or an extra bit of butter if anything dry, like broiled meat. There is such a difference in comfort and health in families, where even there is but little money, if only the person in charge of the kitchen, be she mistress or servant, keeps her wits bright and sharp by daily use and thought; and the older I grow the more convinced I am that discomfort and bad food are as easily preventible as disease, if only people will take the trouble to master a few simple details, and either practise them themselves, or else see that others put them in practice.

PART II.

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HOUSES.

I.

The Attics.

IN the foregoing chapters we have discoursed, in a somewhat vague and discursive manner it is true, on cooks, and kitchens, and culinary matters in general. I invite my readers to start with me from the top of the house, and work our way by degrees down-stairs, peeping into all the rooms as we pass. But there is one remark I want to make, even before we turn the handle of the attic door, and that remark is an assurance that I am not *preaching* to anybody, or even talking to them from a lofty eminence of perfection. I have had quite as many domestic mishaps and troubles as my neighbours, I dare say, and do not feel at all qualified to set myself up as a teacher to any one. What encourages me to go on talking to my unknown friends in this unceremonious manner is, that I occasionally hear from some young beginner that she has been

able to use or adapt some random hint or suggestion with advantage, and so I hope others, here and there, may find a word or two useful.

Then must I confess, so far as my own experience of life goes, that theories and receipts for managing a house or a family are of no use at all. There is sure to be a hitch somewhere, and the theory runs off the rails at once, and is upset in a ditch of circumstance, where it lies quite comfortably on its side ever after. For instance, I used to devote many anxious hours to the study of books full of advice as to how young servants should be trained; and no sooner did I set up housekeeping than I found myself surrounded by middle-aged people as domestics, who ended by taking me in hand and training *me*. Later on, hardly had I made myself thoroughly familiar with the directions as to how children with certain constitutions and tempers should be physicked and managed, than my nursery filled itself with rebellious little imps, who never had a single symptom of any disorder mentioned in my printed book about juvenile maladies, and who utterly declined to be managed, in the matter of temper or manners, according to any known theory under the sun.

I only mention these personal disappointments

to prove that I don't expect *my* teaching to be more successful than that of my neighbours, and that, indeed, it is hardly to be called teaching at all, but only a little friendly chat of advice and an informal statement of what seems best to me. After this earnest disclaimer, we will turn the handle of the attic door and enter the bedroom, where two maid-servants at least will sleep. I must begin by saying that I draw my experience of the dark side of the picture chiefly from London houses. I used often to be asked to look over a furnished house for a friend, and I must honestly confess that ninety-nine times out of a hundred I have been actually shocked at the accommodation provided for servants, both up-stairs and down-stairs,—I hardly know which has been the worst. As a rule servants are generally very patient and uncomplaining about such matters, and do not even appear to expect or desire anything better; but that does not make the selfishness of those who furnish their drawing-rooms luxuriously and neglect the cleanliness and comfort of their servants less culpable. How often I have heard a lady inquire minutely whether her new house-maid was scrupulously clean and tidy, and always neatly dressed. Is it easy to attain any of these results

if three people are cooped up in a hole under the roof, with, perhaps, one cracked basin between them, and a few nails driven into the wall to hang their clothes on? I do not want mistresses to fly into the other extreme, and furnish lavishly the best bed-rooms for their servants. Nor do I believe that even superior servants consider it any hardship to have to sleep in the attic-rooms; but I think they are entitled to find, on taking their situations, that a clean and fairly-comfortable sleeping-place is provided for them, not over-crowded, and that it contains decent accommodation for washing. I know more than one considerate and kind mistress who always allows her servants to move down to the bed-rooms on the floor below the attic during August and September, the two most trying months in the year, when the family is out of town. This boon entails neither expense nor trouble, and a servant is very grateful for the pleasant change and the comparative freshness of the air at night thus secured for her. Of course, in everything I say, I allude only to good servants; but I do not believe they are so rare as people declare them to be, and I am quite sure that a good mistress makes a good servant.

There is a great difference between pampering or spoiling a servant, and treating her with consideration and kindness, and teaching her by every means in your power to form a high standard of what is right and necessary with regard to comfort and cleanliness. I am sure, also, that a neat and tidy room helps a servant in more ways than one to preserve a feeling of self-respect and decency which influences their lives beyond what just meets the eye. I generally find even an untidy servant become neat and nice, and take a pride in keeping her apartment as pretty as she finds it. Of course, if she proves to be hopelessly dirty and untidy, and will neither learn nor try to improve, there is no help for it, she must go ; but this has not often been the case in my experience.

I do not think it advisable ever to put more than two maid-servants into one room. If it were possible, I should always like to give each a separate bed-room, but this is generally impossible in London houses. But there can be no real difficulty in providing each person with a small, separate bed, nor in taking care that the bedding and blankets for each should be as clean and comfortable as if they were one's own. Every two years or so, I would have all the

much good is done by a little judicious praise of a new picture on the wall, or a smart pin cushion, even though it is necessary to add a rider to it in the shape of a "but."



II.

The Nursery.

THE next floor to the attic is generally used in London houses for the nurseries, and there is a great deal to be said about them. If the children are young they will require as much space to play about in as can possibly be spared, and it is a very short-sighted economy which grudges a reasonable outlay in this department. If it is practicable, there should be two rooms opening into each other, so as to ensure a thorough draught of air, which may be admitted whenever the children are out of their nurseries. The largest room should be used for sleeping, washing and dressing, and keeping clothes in, whilst the smaller one is better as empty as possible, except a few shelves for toys and books. A flap table for such meals as breakfast and tea is an advantage; but where economy is necessary, and two fires would be a disadvantage,

then during the winter months, the breakfast table may be prepared in the bed-room,—where I take it for granted the fire has been lighted for the little toilettes,—and the children turned into the play-room, and encouraged to skip about for a few minutes whilst the bed-room windows are opened just to freshen the air for breakfast.

A good nurse and a reasonable mother will find no difficulty in arranging a plan of such little details and carrying them out in earnest. There can never be a well-organized and well-managed nursery, unless the mother and nurse work together in perfect harmony; and it appears to me that the fault generally lies with the mother, who does not *trust* the nurse sufficiently. I have often heard a nurse say in despair, "I know so-and-so is quite wrong, but the children's mamma *will* have it so." I am far from advocating the principle of a number of young children being thrust into a couple of rooms, and left entirely to the care of a servant. But there is a difference between such neglect and the mother placing implicit confidence in her nurse. Of course, the first difficulty lies in finding a thoroughly trustworthy servant,—one who will do her duty as conscientiously when her mistress is a hundred miles away as when

she is in the room beneath. A nurse should be supreme, and there should be no real necessity for the mother's interference, except in very difficult cases of health or temper. No one can teach good manners at table so well as a good nurse ; and she will be just as particular about her children's behaviour when they are taking breakfast and tea with her upstairs, as when they appear downstairs at dinner. No one but a nurse can teach a child by sheer force of habit what a *comfort* cleanliness is, and that it is a personally disagreeable thing to sit down to a meal with unwashed hands or trowsled hair. I don't want to see children always spick-and-span clean, for that would show that they never could do as they liked. A child will always contrive to make its pinafore, as well as its hands and face, dirty, and find intense delight in so doing ; but they need not be accustomed to continue dirty after the game or occupation is over. I never would scold a child for making itself in a mess, so long as a certain amount of mess was necessary to enjoyment. For instance, who would desire or expect children living in the country or at the sea-side to return from a walk as neat and tidy as when they went out ? Of course they have been exploring every hedge and ditch by

the road-side, or racing about a meadow like young colts, or climbing trees, or fishing for minnows. If the walk has been by the sea, then the cheeks are rosy and the eyes bright; but the less said of the condition of boots, socks, and blouses the better.

No: I don't mind how much mess of that sort a child makes itself in, but I should like it to feel, by the time it is two years old, that it would be the acmé of misery to sit down to a meal unwashed and unbrushed. A kind good nurse will never scold or "nag" at her charges for that sort of thing. Indeed, I never allow the word "naughty" to be used for trifles. Reprove, and even punish, a child as much as you like for showing signs of cruelty, selfishness, greediness, falsehood, and such faults; but do not use the same expressions in showing a hole in the pinafore as you would in holding up a piece of cruelty to condemnation. People do not realize how true is the saying that a child's education begins the day of its birth, and neither mother nor nurse can hope for success unless they thoroughly understand each other. With regard to the faults I have mentioned, it is most wonderful to observe how they will show themselves almost in the cradle, and how completely different

one child is from another, even when they spring from the same parents, and are brought up under precisely the same conditions. Certain faults are peculiar to all children, first of which I would put cruelty to animals. This springs, no doubt, from absolute ignorance of the pain they inflict, but still I would begin from the beginning to teach a child that it *does* cause pain; and few things make me so mad, as our American cousins say, as to see an animal tortured by tiny children, whilst the nurse and mother complacently remark, "They will not do so when they know better!" How are they to know better? If I see a baby pulling a dog's or cat's hair, and pinching it, then I long to give a gentle tweak to the golden or dusky fuzz on that infant's head, as a lesson that such endearments cause pain; and if it is one of my own brats, the lesson is administered so efficaciously that it seldom needs to be repeated. Selfishness, greediness, all those unlovable qualities, can be corrected from the first by the gentlest means. Children are much more reasonable than their elders suppose, though they require great tact in their management.

As for falsehood, it is a fault I have never had to contend against, even in the case of very imagi-

native children, where it is very difficult to detect and avoid. I start by implicitly believing everything a child says, and never appearing to doubt its word for a moment. I *always* keep my own promises to children most rigidly, and accustom them to hear me describe a little adventure or incident *exactly* as it happened. If a child notices its nurse or mother using exaggerated expressions, describing everything as "enormous" or "wonderful," it very soon picks up the habit of using unduly big words. Then with regard to fairy stories, they need never really confuse a child's sense of truth. The more complete the illusion, the more thoroughly the child understands that it is all unreal and impossible. Children have often said to me, "Tell me a nonsense story,—something about fairies, and giants, and things that never be-happened." They understand that it is all a made-up story, and discriminate perfectly between such legends and real stories. It is very astonishing to me the exquisite appreciation and delight which intelligent children of even three and four years take in such books as the enchanting *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Through the Looking Glass*, and the *Water Babies*. I can understand bigger children devouring them ; but it seems wonderful

that little dots of creatures can chuckle with as intense a delight and comprehension as their elders over the ballad of "The Walrus and the Carpenter," or the river-bed adventures of "Tom." Of course, in reading such books to tinies one has to simplify the expressions and leave out all extraneous matter; but it seems impossible to find a child is ever too young to enjoy those pearls of story-books in some form or other.

I do not pretend to lay down moral rules for bringing up children; for no two children are alike, nor have I ever found the same system suit any two brothers or sisters. Hence we may form some idea of how elastic any scheme for mind or body must needs be, and how free from crotchets and narrow-minded prejudices both mothers and nurses should strive to keep themselves. A tidy, clean nurse may carry her good qualities to the excess point of making her children miserable through her primness; but she is much more likely to cause them to hate and abhor her really nice habits by presenting them in an odious shape to their little minds. If tidiness and cleanliness interfere with one's daily, nay hourly happiness, and are the torment of one's life, then—a child argues—tidiness and cleanliness are horrible things, to be avoided as

much as possible. As little can one lay down any rule about warmth or diet. One child will have a languid circulation, and be starved to death by treatment which only braces up and invigorates a warm-blooded, active little creature. If they chance to be in the same nursery, the pale, chilly child gets looked upon as being chronically "naughty," because it crouches by the fire instead of keeping itself warm by jumping or playing in the next room, which is perhaps fireless. That poor little mite should be more warmly dressed, fed with a more generous, heat-forming diet than its rougher-moulded companion; and above all, it should be more patiently and tenderly dealt with. There is a wide difference between this patience and weak spoiling. Even a sickly child need not be spoiled: it should rather be taught that the indulgences shown to it are sad signs that it cannot have the enjoyments of other children, and that the sooner it can dispense with coddling and petting the sooner it will feel well, and be able to share the pleasures of its healthy companions.

One little word about dress may, perhaps, be permitted towards the close of this nursery talk. There is nothing I, speaking individually,

detest so much as a smartly-dressed child: morally and physically it is a bad sign. We are quite ready enough to be vain and frivolous without having these qualities grafted on our original natures as babies. Cleanliness is the only permissible coquetry in children's clothes, and instead of two or three "best" frocks, I would have as many dozen simpler ones, which could be always in the washtub. Children's under-clothes, especially when they are very young, should be of as fine material as their mother's means will permit; and I would have everything as well cut and as beautifully made as circumstances would allow. But it is against the "best" frocks I set my face,—those filmy garments of embroidery and lace in which a child cannot move with comfort and pleasure, those enormous stiff sashes which eclipse the poor little toddler, and the smart shoes which are often kept for best until the little toes grow beyond them, but still are stuffed into the silk or satin *bottine* because it matches the sash. What humanitarian has ever seen an unhappy child brought down dressed for company, without feelings of the deepest compassion for the sulky, bored victim of a mother's vanity? Still worse is it when the child becomes conscious and

appreciative of its fine clothes, and is always on the look-out to hear them praised. Once at a railway station I saw an affectionate meeting between two ladies, which was interrupted by a sudden outburst of the wildest grief on the part of a pretty little girl by whom one lady was accompanied. I paused for a moment, fearing that the tears might have been caused by some of my packages hurting the smart little damsel's delicate feet or shoulders; but no,—it was only that Aunt Bessie had taken no notice of a certain smart hat, with a humming-bird in it, which had been put on new that morning.

To look back on my own childhood, one of its most intense mortifications arose from the neglect with which a certain pair of mittens was received by the company in general when I appeared one evening, as usual, in my mother's drawing-room before dinner. I admired these fearful things prodigiously myself: they were of black lattice work, with embossed blue forget-me-nots on the back, and must have been at least four sizes too big for me; but I hoped for the best results in the way of praise and admiration. Alas: no one said a word in their favour, and I retired as soon as possible to shed my ill-repressed tears in the bosom of a fond and

foolish old nurse, who comforted me by assurances that the fault lay in the stupidity of the guests, who were too idiotic to appreciate such beautiful things. Still I sobbed myself to sleep, and it was many a long day before the wound to my vanity got itself even scarred over.

Little girls are naturally a good deal more likely to be harmed by their mother's love of finery than boys are, and therefore should never be taught that there is any undue advantage in one frock over another. I would have children's clothes *always* pretty and fresh, but simple and inexpensive, and above all things comfortable. A smart frock will often have a rough edge at the throat or wrist, which is misery to the little wearer; and I am often grieved to see boys in suits, of which the armholes are too tight, or shirts with wretched collars. The cruel fashion of keeping children's arms and necks bare in bitter winter weather is becoming so completely a thing of the past that I need not inveigh against it here, though no doubt there are still proud mothers who will strip the sweet little dimpled necks and arms to public view in frost and snow, until some bitter night there is an alarm of croup, or an east wind nips the little life-blossom as cruelly and certainly as though

it were the breath of the angel of death himself. A young baby in robes can be kept warm in its flannel shawl, but the moment a child can creep about, or sit up to be dandled, its little frocks should be made high for winter, or a nice gay-coloured flannel jacket put on over the thin white garment in cold weather.



III.

The Nursery—continued.

BEFORE we leave the subject of children's clothes there are still some little points on which I should like to make my ideas clear to those who have patience to bear with my rambling method of discourse. I have already dwelt on the importance of comfort as to the cut and texture of little garments, and here I must do justice to the wonderful patience of the small sufferers, a patience which I have often feared must arise from vanity. I have seen with my own eyes fair little girls arrayed in high black velveteen frocks, with wide scarlet or blue sashes bound round their waists, on a broiling day in July, and wearing the same contentedly because it was considered necessary to be "smart," and they knew that these terrible frocks had cost more than their brown holland or print ones. Then, again, what must children

suffer by wearing sailor hats, stuck on the back of their heads, leaving their eyes and faces entirely bare and without shade, in summer? Yet they will not venture to tilt the straw brim comfortably over their eyes, because nurse has told them they "look prettier so." I say nothing of bare legs in winter, or of the tortures suffered resignedly every night and morning to plait, and pinch, and crimp those wonderful tawny manes of floating hair, which have superseded the hideous crops and plaits of my own childhood. Yet I must acknowledge that, frightful and unbecoming as used to be the *coiffure* of small boys and girls twenty or thirty years ago, the result, when they reached the age of sixteen or seventeen, was a far finer head of hair than graces the skulls of most of the modern *débütantes*. It is becoming a rare thing now-a-days to see even a girl in her teens with the abundant masses of hair growing on her head which used to be the rule in our youth, "when all the world was young, my dear." The modern maiden of sweet seventeen makes no secret of keeping her coils and braids in a cardboard box, except when she is in full dress, and how much of this poor and thin hair is nature's vengeance for the artificially waved hair of the little misses in Park and

Row must be left to wiser heads than ours to determine.

But to return to the subject of dress.—There is literally *no* excuse now for children not being both comfortably and prettily clothed, without running any risk of extravagance or vanity. Serge suits for boys leave nothing to be desired in economy or convenience, though I am getting myself rather tired of the everlasting sailor suits, and prefer miniature Norfolk jackets and breeches buttoned at the knee, instead of the loose hybrid knickerbocker. The long, real sailor trouser is very pretty, but hardly comfortable, I should say, whilst the picturesque kilt divides the weight and warmth of the clothing too unevenly to be really a safe or healthy garb for delicate boys. In little girls' costumes there is hardly anything to be improved upon, if only the materials are simple. For summer I do not know a prettier texture for either boys or girls than brown holland,—the coarse, *brown*, brown holland,—trimmed with dark brown cambric, and stockings and hat-ribbon of the same rich brown. I fear, however, that brown holland is rather a delusion with regard to economy and durability; for, perfectly pretty as it may be before it is washed, it never looks quite so nice

afterwards. To go back to still younger children, who are generally more complete victims to finery: I think one of the prettiest sights I ever saw was the result of the morning toilette of a chubby little fellow of two years old, who always put me in mind of a robin, with his bright black eyes, scarlet cheeks, and pert ways. I saw this monkey every day for some consecutive summer weeks, and this is the way he was invariably dressed,—a simple print or cambric frock, with a white ground and coloured tiny sprig, spot, or line; a snow-white diaper pinafore, very prettily made, fastened at the waist by strips of embroidery, and on the shoulders with plain silk ribbon, a couple of inches wide, of the same colour as the sprig on his frock. The pinafore used to be changed many times a day, and the supply seemed inexhaustible. The frock was fresh every morning also. Then the *chaussure* consisted of home-knitted socks, white spun silk or thread, but with a line or border or clock of corresponding colour to the frock; and plain, neat little bronze or black kid boots or shoes. That happy child possessed *no* best clothes, as his nurse sadly but confidentially informed me; so he could never know the misery of being dressed for company. A clean pinafore did not

take a moment to slip on, and I never saw my young friend with anything but a shining, merry face; and my only regret is that he will never properly appreciate or understand the tortures of starch and embroidery which he has been spared.

It is impossible, within the scope of a chapter of this length, to give rules of or even advice about health or temper. Every child is really different, however great the general likeness may be to a superficial observer; but there is a broad system of firmness and judiciousness—tact, in short—which can be observed towards all, and which is compatible with the greatest kindness and patience on the part of the mother or nurse, and affection and obedience on the part of the child. It makes my heart ache often and often to see,—on the one hand, children spoiled by over-indulgence and weakness; and on the other, repressed and thwarted into shyness and dulness. When one considers seriously what life is, how full of trial, and sorrow, and suffering even the lives of those are whom we deem most prosperous and happy, it seems dreadful to think that we should not try to make at least one brief and fleeting portion of it a happy memory to our little children. Sometimes I am told that such

a one is a "devoted mother;" and I find the house full of cross, rude, selfish children, to whom their parents are foolish slaves and the nurse a protesting victim. I am quite sure that it is the truest kindness to begin with the very first dawn of intelligence to teach a child the pure, pure happiness of being unselfish,—of giving up to others, of waiting on its elders, of serving in a thousand little ways. Scarcely any child takes kindly to the idea at first; but if it is presented to him over and over again, gently and firmly, as a beautiful aim, he will insensibly fall into the way of regarding it as a pleasure and a privilege to do something for another's well-being or comfort. It is of no use scolding a child for refusing to give up a sugar-plum or a toy to another child,—his sense of justice will revolt against a demand of which he feels the unreasonableness; but if it is put before him as a kindness which will make him, as well as his companion, happy, he will often yield. Next to unselfishness,—which should be begun as early as possible,—comes duty. A thing has to be done, and the little one must learn that he will never be "a man," until he tries to do the thing he does not like to do just because it is right. People will hardly believe how early in life a

child can and will comprehend this. The tiniest effort even, in the right direction, should be noticed and encouraged. One little boy of my acquaintance used to, what he called, "fight battles" with himself. It was so touching and pretty to see him sometimes at bed-hour, when his bright eyes were dimmed with sleep, and yet he could not endure to go up to bed so soon, stand at the drawing-room door alone, his head drooped and half-turned aside, quite silent for a moment: then he would run up for his good-night kisses, with his little face all flushed and earnest, and whisper, "I really didn't want to go one bit, but I've fought my little battle and I'm *going*." How much better this is surely than cajolery or remonstrance, night after night! As for obedience, that is most difficult of all to teach (do we not find it hard to practice?); and I never care for the subjugation of the weak to the strong, which generally goes by that name. I always try to teach an obedience which can never be out-grown, but will stretch and expand with growth of mind and body. I explain to a child how we *all* have to be obedient,—first, to God, then to the Queen ("Do *you* do as the Queen tells you?" I'm often asked), and lastly, to parents, teachers, and nurses. Always all our

lives we have to be obedient: that idea is a great comfort to children chafing under a sense of how much is required from them,—poor little mites,—and how grown-up people seem to do exactly as they choose. It is of no use explaining to a bright-eyed baby the subtleties of obedience to law and order. They can barely understand obeying God and the Queen: and that simple rule is enough for them. In all Bible lessons,—which, by the way, I always make and keep as the *reward* of “victories over” a tiny self,—these principles come out easily and naturally. There is the great lesson of our Saviour’s exquisite life and death of self-sacrifice, the pathos and beauty of which every child can understand. The penalty of disobedience lies on the surface of the story of Adam and Eve: besides a thousand instances in Bible-story of duty, of heroism, all of which the young unsullied imagination grasps with a readiness which brings home to us the truth that we ought to receive the “kingdom of heaven as a little child.”

Far be it from me to insist on the necessity of eternally lecturing a child on its duties. How should we like it ourselves? The greatest tact is necessary in dealing with the delicate perceptions of even a clever child, and great allowance

must be made for moods. Of course there are moments for little prayers and brief hymns, with which *nothing* should interfere; but a child's natural reverence will seldom be inclined to stray, and it is not merely at stated times that a mother should train her child. As he grows older—after four years old—the active little mind is always working; and it is *then* that great men's characters are made, and *always* by their mothers. A boy whose mother knows how to make everything which is lofty and truly great in principle attractive to him, will hardly grow up a mean, sordid, cruel, small-souled human being; and no one who has been much with young children can fail to perceive how singularly shrewd and just they generally are in their rapid judgments. I would have all teaching as healthy and breezy as possible in tone. No sickly sentimentality, no maudlin over good little boys and girls who die young. I greatly prefer teaching out of the Bible itself—with its plain, vigorous phraseology, its absence of comment on obvious fact—to reading children Bible stories where the noble eternal truths are diluted to very weakness and insipidity. Of course hard words must be skipped, or changed to more familiar expressions, just at first; but nothing

can improve on the absolute simplicity of Bible history.

Young mothers are apt to be rather sentimental; and I well remember the rap over my mental knuckles which I received long ago from my eldest boy, then aged four, to whom I had been relating a sort of abridged version of Horace Mayhew's terribly touching story called, "Paved with Gold." I dwelt, with all the pathos in my power, on the sufferings of London street children, winding up with a suggestion that toys at least should be entirely dispensed with, and the money thus saved given to watercress-sellers.

"Would you like *all* little boys like me never to have no more toys bought for them, then?" asked my bright-eyed listener.

"Yes," I replied hastily: "it seems so dreadful that some children should have toys and others go starving about the streets."

To my amazement and disgust, a burst of very genuine tears was the answer to this sentiment.

"Oh, you selfish little boy!" I exclaimed. "Are you really crying because you don't like to give up your toys?"

"No, no, mother," came forth in distressful gasps and sobs: "it ain't that at all, because I'm getting too big for toys, almost; but I'm *so*

sorry for Mr. Miller, and Mr. Cremer, and the poor dear Civit Cat! What *will* they all do if they can't earn any more pennies? They'll all starve and die if no little boys or girls ever buy no more toys no more."

I confess it was my first lesson in social economy.

One word more about children's food, and I have done. If common sense is used in the nursery, there is little more to be said on this score. Few children are naturally greedy, and they are less likely to become so if sweetmeats or cakes are not usually made into rewards or punishments. I never allow a child to see any fuss made about things being nice or any special treat; and jam, or honey, plain cake, or even a little barley-sugar, are things of daily consumption. Indeed, my boys leave off sweet things of their own accord at a ridiculously early age, looking upon them as babyish and effeminate food, and "no good at all to make a fellow strong." There is a wide difference between the appetite of a growing child and the greediness of a pampered one. I always allow a child to eat as much perfectly plain and wholesome food as it chooses, with liberty to ask for a piece of dry bread or a cup of milk at any hour of the day besides. I

never can forget what I suffered from hunger myself, as a growing girl. I used to eat as much as I dared, at the risk of being thought unlady-like, at every meal; but, oh, what a chronic state of wolfish hunger I lived in between times! In those days girls were fabulously supposed to be ethereal creatures, who fed on rose-leaves and dew, but I can safely affirm that, from twelve to sixteen years of age, I should greatly have preferred the thickest possible bread-and-butter and quarts of new milk. No one grudged me my food; it was simply forgotten that a great growing girl needed a more nourishing and plentiful diet than her elders and betters, and so I used to be offered dainty *tartines* in place of the solid wedges of even dry bread for which my famishing soul craved. Ever since those days it is a positive joy to me to see a growing boy or girl eat as heartily as I should like to have done, and I must confess I generally am fully gratified in this respect.



IV.

Bed-rooms.

THERE is a great deal which may be usefully said on the subject of bed-rooms, and yet it is difficult to say it, because of the immense diversity of taste. I will take it for granted, however, that, in the first place, everybody likes the room in which they sleep to be at least fresh and sweet. Nothing gives headache so surely as sleeping in an ill-ventilated room, and I am quite certain that one of the first principles of regular health is to be found in an airy bedroom. When I say "airy," I do not mean a lofty, spacious apartment, for such a luxury is seldom to be met with, even in houses where the drawing-room is of very imposing dimensions. Indeed, in choosing an ordinary-sized house, I should always be on my guard, lest the height of the bed-room had been curtailed to add grandeur to the proportions

of the room below ;—I am speaking almost entirely of London houses, remember. Still a small room may be kept as sweet and fresh as a large one, if only the walls, floors, carpet, and bedding are all perfectly clean, and the windows are opened daily as many hours of the day as the weather will admit. Some people sleep with their windows open, but I do not observe that they are more fortunate in the matter of colds and coughs than their neighbours. A door into a dressing-room, or opening on a landing where the window can be kept wide open night and day, is a very good way of admitting fresh air. I will assume that *no one* shuts down the door or flap of the register grate ; if they do so, I can assure them the room will never be so fresh as it ought to be. As for the soot coming down, all I can say is there ought not to be any loose soot if the chimney is thoroughly swept twice a year, when the carpets go to be cleaned, and the room has its biennial scrubbing. I would always have the walls of a bed-room most carefully attended to, and take care that it is a matter of absolute certainty that the fresh paper has not been put on *over* the old one,—a filthy habit much resorted to by rapid and cheap house decorators. In fact, the

walls should be painted underneath the paper, so as to ensure perfect cleanliness; for then, whenever the paper is stripped off, the walls can be well washed. There are many pretty ways of colouring walls without papering them at all, but there is no real objection to wall-paper if it is frequently renewed. I have seen charming walls covered with Japanese paper, or chintz, or fluted white muslin over pink or blue *batiste*, or even silk; but all these are not only expensive, but too suggestive of hiding-places for dust to please me, especially in London. Nor would I have a paper of a monotonous pattern, one which it is distracting to *count* if you are ill. There are plenty of delicate, graceful designs, on grounds of the tenderest tints of grey or pink, or pearly white, each one prettier than the other. No one has any excuse now-a-days for ugliness in their houses. Cheap papers and carpets are just as pretty as expensive ones, and so are chintzes; and even furniture is no longer made of that solid, costly wood which used to run away with so much of the capital of young housekeepers. Nothing can be prettier than the modern bed-room furniture of varnished deal, pine, or birch; and it is as cheap as anything, with shelves, and legs, and doors, can possibly

be. A great deal can be done to make a bedroom pretty, even in London, with plenty of fresh white muslin over a bright-tinted cotton or *batiste* foundation; but as the only beauty of such draperies lies in their spotless purity, I am not sure that I would advise them at all for town life. Screens, toilet tables, window curtains, are all lovely when the ground-work is of some soft delicate shade of rose, or blue, or lilac, and there is abundance of plain white muslin drawn and puckered over them; but just consider what a dust and soot-trap each fold of drapery becomes in a town, and how soon it all loses its snowy charm. I always distrust draperies around toilet-glasses, on account of fire, and my prejudice on this score extends even to the muslin curtains one often sees draping the archway between London drawing-rooms. How often I have nervously watched a servant carrying a lamp, or the master or mistress a lighted candle, so close to these curtains that it remains a wonder, in my mind, to this day, why the white mass of festoons did not flare up.

To return, however, to the imaginary London bed-room. No curtains should the bed have, but I would try and arrange a small screen, either of muslin, chintz, or a pretty wall-paper,

which could be used to guard off draughts; for with all my insane love of fresh air, I never would let anyone sleep in a draught on the hottest night in the year. I would take great care that the mattress which was in nightly use should go to be re-made and cleansed every two or three years, whilst the blankets must be washed every three months at furthest. There should be no valance to the bed, and I always think those spring-mattresses are at once the cleanest, healthiest, and most comfortable contrivances we have yet discovered to go underneath another mattress. Then,—still supposing the bed-room to be in London or any great town,—I would have a cheap, pretty, slight carpet, new as often as I could possibly afford it, for it is very easy to make the floor warmer to the feet in winter by means of rugs before the dressing-table, fire-place, bed-side, etc. These can be taken away in summer, and the cool, slight carpet alone left. Some people, who are supposed to be very good managers, prefer using up an old or half-worn drawing-room carpet for the bed-rooms; but this is an uncomfortable idea to my mind, suggestive of a frowsy odour when the room is shut up; besides which the chances are that such a carpet does not really match or

harmonize with the paper on the wall, and the chintzes of the chairs, ottomans, etc., which should all be as simple in form, and clean and bright in colour, as can possibly be procured.

Chintz curtains are far preferable to any woollen material, in my opinion, for bed-rooms, and soft, white dimity draperies are very pretty with a gay-coloured border or stripes. These latter wash and wear for ever, but are apt to look rather cold perhaps in winter. Almost the prettiest bed-room window-curtains I ever saw were made of full folds of common unglazed twilled pink calico, lined with the same material, to deepen the tint of rose, and trimmed with an imitation white lace border, of a Greek pattern. I must reluctantly confess they belonged to an exquisite, shady country room, and therefore looked soft and fresh and bright for many more months, and even years, than could have been demanded of them in a town.

Some people have an excessive aversion to light in their bed-rooms, whilst others draw up the blinds, fling back the curtains, and court the earliest rays of the midsummer dawn. I confess I belong to the former, and like to "do my sleeping" in a dark room. For this reason I always have, not only dark blue tammy or venetian

blinds to the bed-room window, but if the room faces the east I contrive a short curtain of some slight material, but tolerably impervious to the light, which can be drawn by rings on a slender iron rod beneath the cornice or pole, at night, and concealed behind the chintz curtains during the day. I have often noticed that people who accustom themselves to sleep in the full blaze of the morning light are apt to have a deep furrow between their eyes, caused by the natural contraction of the brow in its efforts to protect the dazzled eyes. This seems a pity, but the other extreme of caution was once so amusingly shown to me that I cannot resist telling the story to my readers.

I was once spending some lovely summer weeks in a country house, where out-door excursions were the rule and not the exception of our rustic life. Of course these sylvan expeditions were planned, or at least sketched out, over-night, but our final arrangements had to wait until we saw whether the weather would permit us to carry them out. Generally there was no doubt on the subject,—a flood of sunshine, and a delicious uproar of singing and chirruping and twittering proclaimed the dawn of an ideal pic-nic day. But one morning the birds only

uttered anxious chirps and calls, the morning air felt damp and raw, and an evident change had come over the succession of genial summer days. I was such a cockney in those days, that I had no idea whether it was only the "morning grey," which is said to issue in a "bonny day," or else the sulky prelude to a regular fit of sky-weeping. In my uncertainty as to whether I should wear the regulation short-skirts for climbing and exploring, or the longer draperies which were then considered decorous in-doors, I bethought me of consulting two blooming lasses, who occupied the next bed-room to mine. Both were young, almost in their teens; both were exceedingly pretty; but, alas, one—the elder sister—was rather vain, and very silly! I had often admired the devoted service and homage which Lucy, the youngest, paid to Mildred, and thought how such amiable unselfishness made up for somewhat imperfect features and a less faultless complexion. It was not far from breakfast-time, but I knew that laziness was not one of the faults of my pretty neighbours, for I used often to hear bursts of laughter, and snatches of songs, and little shrieks, and splashings of water, at a very early hour. So I tapped at their door with no hesitation, and received an immediate invita-

tion to enter. To my surprise, not only was the room half darkened, as though some one were ill, but, seated at the toilette-table, with her maid hard at work plaiting and pinning up long coils of golden hair, was the fair Mildred, *with her eyes shut!* Not only did I see the reflection of her face in the dressing-glass opposite to which she was seated, and observe the closed eyelids, but, that there might be no mistake about it, Mildred turned quite round so as to face me, without, however, opening her eyes. Lucy was seated as near the darkened window as possible, vainly trying to read; but she also seemed quite resigned and un-astonished at her sister's shut eyes and the darkened room. Instead of asking any questions about the weather, I was so much surprised that I faltered out an inquiry as to Mildred's sight and health.

"Oh, I am all right," she answered, in her usual sweet but languid fashion: "there is nothing the matter with me, only I never open my eyes at first. The morning light is so bad for them, you know.

"I don't know anything of the kind," I cried, bluntly. "Is it possible that you do not open your eyes until breakfast-time, Mildred? How do you manage to dress?"

"Oh, Lucy dresses me," said the beauty, indifferently, "and she does not mind the dark. *Nothing* is so bad as straining the sight the first thing in the morning," she continued, oracularly. "I *never* open my eyes until a few minutes before breakfast, and I am very careful even then. But this is such a dark morning Lucy says, that I think I may venture on a little imprudence."

So saying, she slowly and cautiously lifted her lovely white eyelids, and permitted the shaded light to penetrate to the treasures concealed beneath them, in the shape of a pair of blue eyes.

I don't think I ever laughed so much in my life, and my readers will agree with me that surely *this* is the other extreme of caution as to sleeping in a bright light.

I do not feel as if there was much more to say about bed-rooms, after I have insisted strenuously on the necessity of their always smelling fresh and sweet, and being as dainty and pretty as their owner's means will permit. The china now-a-days is really so tasteful in device, so convenient in form, and so moderate in price, that it is difficult to go very far wrong in that direction. Also, the modern marble-

topped washing-stands are so clean, and so far preferable in every respect to their wooden predecessors, that there is no occasion to recommend *them* especially. I think, therefore, we may close this short and random gossip, with a promise that in the next chapter we will descend a story lower, to the more interesting level of the drawing-room floor: for you see, after all, that I am but a cockney writing for cockneys; and it is easier to discuss houses built on one model than to lose oneself in the intricacies of a rambling country house, or the prim neatness of a suburban country villa.



V.

The Drawing-room.

IN my opinion, the first requisite of a drawing-room is, that it should possess an original stamp and style of its own ; so that if the visitor found himself alone in it for five minutes, and looked around, he would be able to form an idea of the tastes and habits of the people who arranged it, and lived in it every day. Of course I am speaking of a drawing-room (or *withdrawing-room*, as it used to be called, in contradistinction to the living-room or parlour) which is in daily use as a sitting-room. I take no interest in those cold and stately saloons which are only meant to be inhabited for a few hours at midnight, and are then used as passage-rooms for a gay and moving crowd. Few things in life are more profoundly dispiriting than to be ushered in the morning into such a room, and left alone to gaze on an expanse of Aubusson

carpet, with stiff couches and settees ranged round the edge, and satin coverings and cushions, looking garish and vulgar in the daylight. The glittering frames of mirror and sconce do not enliven the walls on which they hang; and if only a broken fan or bracelet-clasp lies conspicuously on one of the tables, waiting for its owner to claim it, I venture to say the discouragement of the visitor will be complete.

No, I speak of a drawing-room in which the mistress of the house spends all her time indoors; in which she works, and writes, and rests, and even plays with her children; and it is such a room which has a knack of receiving the impression—as on soft wax—of its owner's tastes and character. Who does not know drawing-rooms in which the lady of the house receives you, visit after visit, year after year, and which *never* change or alter, save that the tints of the chintzes grow paler, and a general dimness like mildew creeps over everything? Such rooms were furnished, probably, by an upholsterer, to start with, according to the most correct and conventional style of low art and high price; and their mistress has lacked courage ever since her bridal days to alter their monotonous symmetry. On the other hand, I dislike a room

just as much where everything is queer, and violent, and *outré*,—where there is neither harmony nor repose, for mind or body, to be found in any corner. I like a sitting-room to be warm and bright and cheery in winter, and cool and shady and restful in summer, and thoroughly comfortable and liveable-in all the year round.

I have the less hesitation in saying this, because I know that money is the last thing requisite to secure these conditions; and I think they are oftener to be found combined in the sitting-rooms of people with quite moderate incomes than in the drawing-rooms of richer and more ambitious folk. After all, one can only speak confidently on such matters from one's own individual experience; and I can assure those of my readers who have but a very small margin left after necessary expenses for the decoration and prettiness of life, that contrivance, invention, and a little taste will produce as agreeable an effect in their drawing-room as any upholster's man, with *carte blanche* in his pocket for chairs and tables, sofas, and eke cabinets. I have always been just comfortably poor all my life, and I have *always* had a pretty, cosy room to sit in; and I am quite sure that if a fairy godmother came down the chimney on

purpose to bestow a large fortune on me, my next drawing-room would be stiff, and handsome, and comfortless, and I should never go into it unless absolutely obliged to do so. I have had drawing-rooms of canvas, where a hideous bare pole in the centre had to be concealed, and where the carpet was all too warm, and soft, and yielding to the feet,—not from inherent richness of texture, for, indeed, it was only of blue and white cotton twill, but because of many feet of burning sand which lay beneath. Yet boughs of trees made that bare pole a green stem, from which hung spurs and whips, and even stirrups; bullock-trunks, with canvas stretchers between, made settees; and gaunt, folding-up tables could always be draped by gay Indian cloths. I am free to confess, however, that I date my first grey hairs from that tent drawing-room, which moved twenty-five miles ahead every day. Its furniture had a tendency to collapse, which was truly frightful; and the ingenuity of Indian servants in propping up a chair or table which really ought to have gone to the *misteri*, or carpenter, before it was put back in the tent, led, many a time and oft, to tragic and disastrous consequences.

Then I have had to make officers' quarters

pretty and home-like, in spite of the most hideous and ghastly wall-papers which could be procured for love or money; rooms with a network of bell-wires, running close to the ceiling, which gave an unmilitary visitor the impression that he or she had strayed into a head-centre telegraph office by mistake. In those rooms I always felt that everything was a sham. Nothing was what it professed and appeared to be; and I lived as one oppressed by a horrible secret, and in constant dread of some convulsion of nature exposing the frightful falseness of everything. Tables were not tables at all; they were only lids of boxes: ottomans were be-cushioned and be-chintzed military chests: everything screwed on and off, or folded flat, in a distracting manner, even to the handles of the water-cans and the saucepans. Of course this folding up and unscrewing occasionally took place involuntarily, at wrong and unseasonable moments, and the result used to be confusion and "matter in the wrong place." But still there must have been some glamour of brightness and prettiness about it all, for the much laughed-at little *salon* has left its own impression of home and happiness on one of the varied pages of my past life.

Another turn of the leaf shows me a little

wooden house, up a quiet valley on a New Zealand station, and there the picture looks gay and pretty enough, although the accessories were simplicity itself, and every article of furniture had been slowly and expensively conveyed over roads which would give an English upholsterer a fit to look at, if he were to be told that his chairs and tables had to be jolted over them.

But perhaps it would be more profitable, if, instead of dwelling on my own experiences, I touched on the results of ingenuity which I have come across in other places. One of the prettiest little drawing-rooms I ever saw had been arranged—indeed, I might say, created—entirely by two girls, who came from school to a country parsonage, where there was no mother to receive them, only a hard-working, narrow-stipended father, who was quite content with the faded parlour whose moreen curtains and horsehair furniture he had bought from the last incumbent twenty years before. I am afraid to say how few pounds were forthcoming to expend in the remodelling of that pretty room, and those few pounds were first honestly earned and saved by the two bright-haired girls in question. I feel that it is putting the end of the story first, to mention here that they have both had the mis-

fortune to marry rich and prosperous men, and have been transplanted to luxurious homes, where their splendid talents for making the most of small means will be sadly hidden away. Well, here is the result of their labours,—I cannot give the progress or details, because neither I nor any of their friends were allowed to see the parlour until it had been remodelled. A tiny room, to begin with, but made picturesque by a long, low lattice-window, with a deep window seat. The hideous drab-coloured moreen curtains were removed from this embrasure, dyed a rich, warm crimson, bordered with some coarse Greek lace, and hung as a *portière* over the baize swing-door of the room. The wooden frame of the window was scraped, stained, and varnished, to look like highly-polished old oak, and the recess used as a table. The lattice itself was curtained outside by clematis for summer shade and perfume, and inside by a crimson blind for winter warmth and brightness. Two healthy plants of small-leaved creeping ivy stood, in bark-covered boxes, at each side of the window-frame on the broad sill, and were trained as a border inside. On the walls hung a paper of pure glazed white, without any pattern; for the girls declared they were afraid of venturing on

matching flowers or scrolls, as it had all to be done by their own hands. A dim, rather oval piece of looking-glass was fastened over the fireplace, and, instead of a frame, had a paper border of ivy-leaves. Originally this bordering had been bought by the yard and cut out; but what made it so natural and pretty was the effect produced by a shadow here and a leaf or tendril there, put in by the young decorators' clever pencils and paint-brushes. These little touches, judiciously added, quite took away from the ordinary stiffness of a paperhanger's design, and gave a peculiar grace and lightness to each delicate wreath or spray. For this ivy bordering formed the frame of all the pictures; it drooped here and there on the wall; it climbed up by the mantel-piece; it spanned with an irregular arch both door and window, and turned the commonplace room into a sylvan bower. I need not stop to dwell on the contrivances for furniture,—the shelves, the boxes which did duty for ottomans, the old mattresses picked to pieces and re-made to fit into the angles of the walls for divans, covered with patchwork or marvelously cheap and pretty chintz. I can only affirm that the cost of that charming room might be reckoned almost by shillings, and that

the effect and comfort far exceeded that of many an expensive *salon*.

The great point, after all, is that the style and furniture of the whole house, as well as of the drawing, or any other room, should suit its circumstances and surroundings. For instance, this little ivy-twined nest would have been out of place in a certain Highland shooting-box which rises like a magic picture before me as I write. There the little sitting-room, sacred from the odour of pipes and guns which pervaded the rest of the house, though all too small to be called a drawing-room, was quite as pretty and thoroughly in keeping as its English prototype. So diminutive were its proportions, that when a cottage piano chanced to be added to the furniture, there was no space for even its modest bulk until a portion of the outer wall had been removed and a sort of niche or recess added to hold the little instrument. These walls were of palest cream-colour, distempered, and panelled lengthways, at a distance of eighteen inches or so apart, by boards of varnished Norwegian pine. At the top of each board or panel, just clear of the ceiling, was fixed a stuffed roe-deer's head, whilst on the spaces between the panels hung a set of prints from Landseer's drawings,

of a small size, and simply framed alike in a carved heather border. The mirror, instead of the stereotyped gilt frame, was bordered by carved sprays of bracken, stained and varnished to match the tint of the panels. The carpet was of a greenish, mossy pattern, with a diminutive border of white heather, and the pale green ground of the chintz was sprigged by purple and white heather. The room derived its colour chiefly from jars of flowers, homely sturdy blossoms enough, but sweet and bright as all around.

Indeed, it may be taken as a safe rule in furnishing a sitting-room, that walls, carpet, curtains, and furniture-covering should be of a subdued and neutral tint. They need not necessarily be dull or flat, but none of these should obtrude themselves violently on the sight on first entering. Rather should the decorator rely on such things as table-covers, cushions, books, and flowers for giving vivid patches of colour. The result of keeping this steadily in view will be a living-room which it will be a rest and refreshment to inhabit, and in which one can feel at home. Every lady has her pet hobby in decoration ; mine is rounding off the corners of my drawing-room. In New Zealand this used to be easily done by banks of fern set in rude boxes, covered

with bark, and filled in by tufts of feathery Tohi grass (very like the Pampas grass) and a wealth of draping greenery. But here, in London, with these beautiful, graceful decorations as much out of my reach as the famous Blue Bird or Talking Tree of fairy lore, I console myself with brackets. Almost every room in a house I inhabit is be-bracketed. Large brackets fill every spare corner, made of deal to begin with, and costing but a few shillings. They are fastened by slips of wood beneath, on the wall, at about the height of an ordinary table. Sometimes they are dressed, like those little occasional tables familiar to us all, in green or crimson cloth with a deep woollen fringe to match. Sometimes they are covered with a gay piece of rep, and bordered by a home-made point-lace flounce. A very pretty one is of deep blue cloth, with a sort of brown-linen needle-work border. Again, in a bed-room they are nestled up in white muslin over thick pink muslin ; but the most ambitious is the least successful, in my private opinion. This grand bracket is also of deal, which has been painted black and varnished, with a piece of red velvet let in on the table part and a gilded rounded edge towards the room. It is also supported on a sort of claw or foot (which none of the others

are), and I must acknowledge that it wears a *faux* air of splendour which oppresses me.

But every year the taste of the public improves with regard to the rooms in which the lady of the house lives. Even large and spacious saloons are now made cosy and homelike by screens and easels and chintzes covering up the satins and silks on sofas and chairs. A very clean and pretty fashion is creeping in once more, of parquet floors covered by mats and rugs and skins, in winter, which can be removed or not according to the length or warmth of our capricious and fleeting summer. I am very fond of covering the drawing-room floor with that wide whitish India matting which one sees in such quantities at the Baker Street bazaar. I like it to fit the room, and to be bordered by a red leather binding about three inches wide. On it can be laid Persian rugs, of texture and price to suit long or short purses, before each table or sofa, unless, indeed, the weather chance to be very warm, when it is cooler without any other covering.

I have hardly left myself space to say a word about the ornaments of a drawing-room, but on this subject no arbitrary rule can be laid down. As a rule, I would have very few, and those few

as artistically good as possible. Trumpery distorted little figures in ormolu or cheap china are an abomination to me, and it is possible to procure statuettes, vases, etc., in terra-cotta, which are carefully and correctly copied from the antique, which can offend no one's taste. No room can look comfortable to me without plenty of books,—not company volumes, symmetrically arranged by the housemaid, but fitting shelves in every available niche or corner. Next to books come flowers; and by flowers I do not mean a stiff and costly bouquet, which might as well be made of muslin or paper for all the individuality it possesses, but ever so few blossoms, tastefully arranged, not too crowded, and with plenty of green. I know a rustic drawing-room, far from town or green-house or conservatory, which is always gay and bright, from November until the snowdrops and primroses begin again, by bouquets of berries, mixed with moss, and red, brown, and yellow leaves, gathered from deserted quarries, sheltered lanes, or tangled undergrowth of cover. There is always some hidden form of beauty and colour in such places to reward the patient seeker.

Another secret of an attractive drawing-room is a liberal supply of clean, soft white muslin

for curtains; not the skimpy, large-patterned curtain one sees in a lodging-house, whose glaring whiteness only brings the surrounding threadbare dinginess into stronger relief; but soft, full folds of plain muslin, with a fringe or lace border, and perhaps a border of colour at the edge—unless, indeed, the windows chance to be wide and lofty; or else clear muslin, with a very small pattern either in stars or spots. But these things are exquisitely pretty now, and indeed they ought to be so, for our artists and designers no longer confine themselves only to studying effects on wall-hangings and brocade for rich people's houses, but furnish us poor people, every day, with beautiful simple designs on chintz and paper, which are artistic enough to make the most economically furnished house a pleasure instead of a penance to live in.



VI.

The Dining-room.

WE have now made our way down to the dining-room, and on the question of its decoration and comfort there is no arbitrary rule to be laid down. A few years ago one dining-room used to be exactly like another. If it was in town, then the walls were painted of a dingy drab or sickly green colour, and hung with indifferent oil-paintings of the family. A Turkey carpet, age unknown, covered the floor, heavy moreen curtains of a sombre (or, as upholsterers pleasantly called them, rich) colour, hung in straight folds from the windows, a dozen heavy ugly chairs stood against the wall, and the only brightness in the room would be derived from the reflected light on the well-rubbed mahogany table and sideboard. If the dining-room was in the country, the chances were that the furniture was still older and

shabbier, and that a dark red or brown flock paper of terrible solemnity covered the walls, on which hung sporting prints.

But now how changed for the better is all this ! People still seem to regard eating and drinking as an austere occupation, to be performed amid grave and sad-coloured surroundings, so even the modern decorations of a room in which these functions are carried on are kept sombre and quiet in tone. At all events, however, the tone is now more artistic, and the decorative colours are not subdued to such a depth of dulness. The sage greens, autumnal leaf yellows, and browns of modern rooms have a certain intensity and richness which gives repose without dinginess, whilst the decorator will produce for you papers, or patterns for stencilled walls, which leave nothing to be desired on the score of artistic beauty. The heavy folds of the curtains are now bordered with arabesque designs, and lightened by inner draperies of white muslin, whilst stained glass, or gilt or straw short blinds, have quite superseded those depressing wire blinds of even a quarter of a century ago. In the country, too, the dining-room is no longer the dingy hole it used to be. In modern rectory or small country house bright tints of distemper or oil shine out

in sparkling cleanliness on the walls, and the scent of the mignonette and buzz of the mowing machine come through larger windows with plenty of fresh cheap drapery. Photographs and prints from good pictures have crowded out one's dismal, hideous ancestors, and a writing-table stands perhaps in a good light. On the side-board, too, are pretty, cheap china pots, with pretty ferns or flowers in them ; and where carved-back chairs with velvet or leathern cushions are a dream of the future, those pretty cane-seated ones of Austrian manufacture make a very good substitute, without draining too heavily the slender purse of the present.

What I want to impress upon my readers is that no one who is furnishing a house nowadays need buy ugly things. There are plenty of cheap, clean, and pretty articles of decoration and use to be had for every part of the house ; and for my own part I think a room, in the arrangement of which taste and economy have gone hand in hand, is often far prettier and more comfortable than one furnished "regardless of expense." Money cannot buy the knack of putting a few green leaves and tufts of grass or berries into a well-shaped though cheap vase in such fashion that it shall straightway become a delight to an

artist's eye, nor can it so dispose of chairs and tables as that the room shall invite you to rest if you are tired, or to work if you are busy. The curtains which receive every morning a rapid touch of adjustment from a lady's hand hang in far easier folds than those primly arranged by ever so upper a housemaid ; and although I suppose we always shall pine after wealth all our lives, and think, if we could only attain unto it we should live in comfort and happiness ever after, the experience of the few on that score ought to be a great consolation to the many. I declare I seldom or ever go into a splendid house without a feeling of relief that it does not belong to me, and a half-defined sensation of pity for the owners ; whereas I am seized by wicked fits of covetousness when I have beheld something very cheap, and bright, and cosy, and altogether delicious and homelike, under perhaps a thatched roof.

But we are evidently looking too long and too dreamily out of the dining-room window, and must turn our attention to the room itself. As there is so little to be taught with regard to its decoration, let us look at the table, and talk about what should be placed on it every day. In the first place, I am sure it is a mistake for

people who habitually live in a small way to have any *best* china, or even best glass, though there is more excuse for that. If occasion arises for the use of the better sets of dinner or breakfast things, depend upon it that there will be more likelihood of a long list of killed and wounded among the plates and dishes when the guests depart and things return to their usual course. Here, again, money has nothing to do with beauty. The commonest ware can now be procured painted in loveliest designs. A bent wreath of ivy, roots and all, forms a border to a dinner set, which costs only a few shillings; so do plates and dishes with simple lines of brilliant blue or rose. A chaplet of hop-leaves is an enchanting edge to one's plate, with the bind bent into handles to tureen and side-dish. Mr. Ruskin's theory of *suitableness* of decoration must always be borne in mind, and for that reason the modern fashion of quite a plain centre to the plate, broken only by crest or initials (the latter for preference), is generally the safest. The shape of decanters, tumblers, caraffes, etc., should all be considered before the cost, or thickness, or even merits of the glass; and as a general rule, such things cannot, in a family of small income, be too cheap. I have sometimes seen the break-

fast and tea cups made to match the dinner set, the object being to save the necessity for extra plates; but this is only an advantage in cases where there is a good deal of moving and packing. Nothing can be more convenient or prettier than those two small round-covered dishes, with a connecting handle between. Originally invented for curry and rice, they are just as often used for two sorts of potatoes, or for slices from the joint, and potatoes at lunch where only one or two people need be provided for. Such a dish costs only a few shillings, and is far better than anything we had before. If one lives in the country, I would have a few flowers or leaves on the table at every meal. A breakfast table always looks the prettier and more inviting for a few fresh leaves, and a dewy blossom or two, and it is a graceful and refined task for some one, well worth five minutes' time and trouble. I would always have the simplest and cheapest meal served in a way which would give an agreeable impression to those who have to partake of it, and this is entirely a matter of taste and skill, not of money. Many people seem to think that, so long as some food of some kind is placed on the table by a servant, those who have to partake of it are unreasonable

to expect anything else. But there are many other points to be considered. There is the refreshment to the eye which a combination of scrupulous cleanliness, elegant forms, and harmonious colours go to build up, and which are faithfully repeated in common material, from the costly designs prepared for the rich. A great part of this improved taste among those who produce and those who buy, we owe, of course, to our numerous schools of art all over the kingdom, and the exhibitions and museums which bring and keep artistic forms constantly before the public eye.

If we have satisfactorily settled that our dining-room shall *not* be an abode of gloom and darkness, but rather as lightsome and cheerful a place as the means and circumstances at our disposal will warrant, let us next consider what we shall put on the table itself,—I mean, in what way we can so order our daily meals, as well as our entertainments, as to make an invitation to dinner a pleasure instead of a penance to all concerned. First of all, to speak of our daily meals: they ought certainly to be both palatable, wholesome, and pretty every day, all the year round. I steadily refuse to listen to the plea of poverty, behind which so many incompetent

housekeepers shelter themselves. As a general rule, the weekly bills are highest in those houses where the daily meals are nastiest; for knowledge of the subject, and "faculty" (that delightful American word), are more requisite than money. I have seen with my own eyes two mutton chops served in succession to the master of a house where ten thousand pounds a year would barely have paid the weekly bills, and where the kitchen staff might have formed the company of a regiment. The head cook, the *chef*, chanced to be out of the way, and the first mutton chop came up blue and trembling when cut, whilst the second had apparently been in the fire, so black and gritty was its outside. What had money to do in this case? and so it is in many others I could name. I have dropped in unexpectedly to lunch with a family who brought up half-a-dozen children on a very few hundreds a year. Everything at table, though as frugal as possible, was cooked to perfection, and served with exquisite cleanliness and taste, and yet all seemed to do itself. Of course, if the reverse of the picture had been presented to me, I should have received apologies on the score of the large family and the small income, whereas all the time the comfort and agreeableness of the meal

was entirely owing to the mistress knowing how to teach her servant to boil a potato, and serve up the remains of yesterday's dinner in a palatable and pretty manner.

For my own part, I have found it a very good rule to live always, every day, up to the mark,—that is to say, I never allow a clumsily contrived meal, or even a badly cooked dish, to pass unnoticed. The only way to be really comfortable, and able to see your friends without a thought of extra trouble, or extra expense, is to have everything, however simple and cheap, as nice, as well cooked, as prettily served, when you are quite alone as when what is called company is expected. One of the first things I have almost invariably to teach a new cook is that I prefer half a pint of good soup to two quarts (for my private consumption, remember!) of wretched ditch-water, strongly flavoured with Worcester sauce. The general *idée fixe* of an English plain cook is quantity. Huge lumps of meat, enormous puddings of the commonest and most monotonous construction (but which swallow up a vast deal of milk, sugar, and eggs, to say nothing of other ingredients), besides bushels of potatoes and many big loaves of bread—that is her idea of decently comfortable and respectable

housekeeping. Whereas everybody, servants and all, can be infinitely better fed with a greater variety of less expensive material. But this is more trouble to learn and to practise, and requires more practical knowledge on the part of the mistress of the house than is generally to be found in small establishments.

I do not think that half enough attention is paid to the kitchen bill of fare. "Anything will do for the servants' dinner" is the general remark. I would be the last person to pamper or spoil servants, or feed them on *fricandeaux* and puff pastry, but there is a wide difference between such folly and the daily care and thought which should provide for the health and well-being of those who serve you. A little hot soup of a winter's day, and a hot pudding, are great additions to cold meat in the kitchen, whilst on a day that there is a hot joint for the early dinner, whatever vegetables are in season help to eke it out. Such trifling details as these, showing, if they show nothing else, that the mistress *thinks* of her servants, go far to build up a system of confidence and affection which goes a good deal beyond mere wages or presents. And if the employed and employer work hand in hand cheerfully and ungrudgingly on the

understanding that every dish eaten upstairs and downstairs is to be palatable and wholesome, and nicely served every day without incurring ruinous expense, it is astonishing how smoothly and easily things will go on.

With regard to company—though it is a word I dislike excessively—there is much difference of opinion. Some people like to be made a fuss about, and do not consider they have been to a dinner party unless they have been able plainly to perceive the usual signs of mingled stiffness and anxiety, which is the ordinary characteristic of an English dinner party. Such guests would also consider themselves insulted at the plainness of the *menu* I fear I should prepare for them, though I can assure them most earnestly they would feel much better next day after partaking of simple, perfectly prepared food, than after dining on a mixture of badly-cooked unwholesome mixtures. It is much better for middle-class people not to attempt too much, or to pretend for one wretched night that they have an income of £5,000 a year. Of course one would give one's guests the best to be had, only don't let there be a frantic attempt at too many "bests," and above all don't spoil a tolerable dinner by vile wine! Every word that Polonius

says about one's clothes matching might be slightly transposed to suit one's entertainments, and when to well-cooked, well-served food, and wine as good as you can possibly afford, you add a prettily arranged dinner table (no hired *épergnes* or heavy bunches of flowers), with subdued and shaded light, cool in summer, agreeably warm in winter, and—rarest and most unpurchasable of all—pleasant guests; then you are in a fair way to spend an evening which will afford a wide contrast to our ordinary experience of dining with our friends. If the mistress of the house feels tolerably certain that her cook is not attempting more than she can perform, that there are not more dishes to be cooked than her resources will admit of keeping and serving hot, and that, in fact, there is very little difference (except, perhaps, in quantity) to what is the daily bill of fare, she will be at her ease and happy. I would go beyond Pope's line of culminating praise, and I would not only have her "mistress of herself, though china fall," but I would have the china of an every-day texture and price (as pretty as you please), so that there would be no occasion for a sublime effort of self-command, even though china fell. How much happier, too, would the master

of the house be, if, instead of his house being invaded by slow and solemn male creatures, who look as if they had come straight from the undertaker's, and before whom he feels at a curious disadvantage which he can neither account for nor explain, he knew that his wine—decanted may-be by his own careful hands,—would be handed to him and his friends by the accustomed Mary or Jane (or both together) of every-day life, who would flit noiselessly about in pretty grey gowns, and pink ribbons in their caps!

But I quite admit the practical difficulties in such a path as my pen so glibly sketches out. Marys and Janes are awkward, plain cooks fail unaccountably and miserably at the last moment, and chaos and confusion may reign, instead of grace and peace and simple enjoyment. I don't know what to recommend in such a dilemma except "faculty" again. There is nothing like it, and somebody in the house *must* possess it, in some considerable degree too, unless it is to be a very uncomfortable, expensive, unsatisfactory establishment, upstairs and downstairs. Get "faculty," then, is my advice to young women of every rank and grade in life, for it is easier to get when you are young; and, having got it,

use it with tact and good-will, for the comfort and well-being of everybody around you ; and you will find your life full of opportunities for keeping the precious possession bright and shining by daily use.



VII.

Kitchens.

NOW that we have quite reached the bottom of the staircase let us think what there is left to say about the kitchen and lower rooms. It is of great importance that they should be as light and airy and well ventilated as possible, for, except the nurseries, they are inhabited during more hours out of the twenty-four than any other part of the house. Yet we have only to penetrate to most servants' offices, or try to recollect those which we have seen, to come to the conclusion that this necessity for good air and plenty of it is not half enough recognised either by builders or owners of human dwelling places. In the country there is of course neither the same evil, nor even the risk of its consequences; but as there are many more hundreds, nay thousands, of kitchens and servants' rooms *below* than *on* the level of the

ground in Great Britain, it is with them our business chiefly lies. It always appears to me that the good health which most servants enjoy is very wonderful when one takes into account the rooms in which their lives are chiefly passed, and I have made up my mind that they are too busy to be ill: a very good thing for themselves and their employers! But seriously, it is every mistress's bounden duty to see that not only are the rooms in which her servants sleep (concerning which we spoke in a previous chapter), but that the rooms in which they do their work, shall be wholesome and cheerful. This caution would seem superfluous if I had not seen with my own eyes kitchens in London, and in very fine houses too, beneath whose boarded floor an old half closed drain ran, distilling a slow but deadly poison into the air of all the basement; whilst in the country it is by no means uncommon to shut out the servants' offices by hedges or shrubberies, which just as effectually shut out light and air, and sunshine, and all that goes to make healthy atmospheric conditions. Even underground, as town kitchens must perforce be, there is a possibility of securing both health and comfort, and these are best done by at once ascertaining what state the drains are in which

run beneath the floor of the kitchen. As soon as that point is satisfactorily settled, the next thing is to take care that the floor itself shall be covered with some material which unites comfort with cleanliness. Although cocoa-nut matting is very popular as a floor covering, it has proved too much of a receptacle for dust to please me. If the kitchen floor chances to be a boarded one, it is comparatively easy to secure cleanliness and comfort by means of a square of old carpet, neatly bound or bordered (which I would have *scoured* twice a year, not beaten), and which could constantly be taken up and shaken.

Nowhere is cleanliness so important as in the kitchen, and for my part, I would not keep ever so good a cook in my service if she were not also scrupulously clean in her ways and surroundings. One is pretty sure to consume the necessary "peck of dust" involuntarily, out of doors, without swallowing double the allowance in one's food. Every young housekeeper should be just as particular about the brightness and neatness of her kitchen as of any other part of her house. And I must acknowledge here that it is in this respect I can see the use of the first regulation made by the Committee of the National Training School of Cookery, which

was, that every pupil should either learn, or prove that she already knew, how to clean to perfection each kitchen utensil. When a young lady first enters upon her duties as mistress of a house, how often is she thwarted in her efforts to see that everything under her housewifely sceptre is bright and shiny, from copper sauce-pans up to crystal door-handles, by her own ignorance of what constitutes the highest degree of perfection. Now, such ignorance is no longer possible. The thrifty housewife—for I am not writing for fine ladies who never see the inside of their own kitchens—when her cook tells her that such or such a saucepan, or tin, or copper mould, “is as bright as it’ll come, mum,” is in a position to answer “Oh no, I *know* it is not, for I have made them shine much more than that *myself*.” This is a very unanswerable argument, and the cook will either have to make her mind up to keep her kitchen and her pots and pans beautifully bright and clean, or else to go in search of a nice, comfortable, ignorant mistress (probably cook will call her “a lady as *is* a lady”) who will let her do just as she pleases. Besides learning the name and use of each kitchen utensil, the modern *ménagère* may, if she pleases, learn also the way to manage the

flues and valves of kitchen ranges—both open and closed—so that if a new cook happens to be unaccustomed to the one or the other, there will be no occasion to send for a workman (who will of course discover that there is something radically wrong, and that the range must come out), but the lady herself can step down to the kitchen and point out to the new servant how the various rods and stops and mysterious little trap-doors should be dealt with. Then in the matter of gas-stoves ; they are, with proper management, the most convenient, clean, and economical things ever invented, whilst they can become exactly the contrary of all this in the hands of a careless, dirty, or extravagant servant. In the first place they are so convenient that there is the constant temptation to do all the small cooking on them whilst a huge fire is roaring itself idly away. I have myself seen a slender breakfast, consisting of a cup of coffee and an egg, being prepared over a fully turned-on-gas stove, with the large jet to see to cook by at night also flaring high, whilst a good fire burned in absolute uselessness three feet off. Of course this is reckless waste, but I mention it because it is such a constant complaint. I think if something could be invented with regard to

the gas-pipe which supplies the stove, by means of which it could be, as it were, locked up, or off, and the key kept by the housekeeper or mistress, it would be a great boon. In cases of sickness, or of a hot summer's day, when there is perhaps no late dinner, the kitchen fire could be let out early, and the kettle boiled on the gas stove. The gain of such a thing is incalculable, and it seems a pity that the kitchen should—as is so often the case—be without it, because it is so constantly perverted from its real use.

Another fertile source of complaint against a gas hot-plate is, that when it is lighted it sends a disagreeable smell into the house. For years I made myself unhappy about this, for, in spite of ventilators artfully contrived in the kitchen wall, of swing doors, and so forth, the evil went unremedied. The very first day I watched a pupil at the South Kensington School cleaning a gas stove, and heard the instructor's explanation, the source of the smell stood revealed. There are always iron bars, like a gridiron, over the gas plate to stand the kettles and saucepans upon. These bars should invariably constitute a separate frame work, to be lifted on or off at pleasure, and in my kitchen they were a fixture. The consequence was, that the solid sheet of

iron beneath received all the little splutterings and drippings from the saucepans which accumulated in the shape of grease. Of course it was impossible to get at this plate to clean it, and the moment it became hot, these grease spots began to frizzle and give forth a most offensive odour. My cook probably knew the cause of the grievance, but was too wise a woman to proclaim her knowledge.

No kitchen can be kept really beautifully clean, unless its chimney be constantly swept. By constantly, I mean every four or five weeks. Kitchen chimneys are, I confess, a mystery to me. With two I had an intimate acquaintance; one was a perfectly straight chimney—so the sweep said at least,—and the other was crooked. Both these chimneys were the worry and torment of the cook's life, for in each the soot had a peculiar fashion of suddenly descending in masses on the kitchen fire; and I am sure I need hardly say that the occasions for these descents were invariably just as a carefully prepared dinner was in the act of being dished up. But of all absurd contretemps of this nature, the recollection of one at which I assisted as a guest, recurs to me with a clamorous demand to be shared with my readers.

Imagine, then, everything of the most conventional type. The handsomely-appointed house, in a big and fashionable square, the hot summer's evening (for it was the middle of a very gay season), the assembling guests, the stately and solemn butler, the liveried, but still stately footmen. It is the moment of moments, when conversation is impossible with the master of the house, for he is distracted with doubts of the proper precedence of two great ladies. One is young and pretty, the other terribly sallow and ill-favoured. The hostess does her best to keep the recreant true to the awful standard of Burke and Debrett, by smiling sweetly upon the company with her lips, but glancing grimly from time to time in the direction whither her husband's steps should tend. Dinner has not yet been announced, but the signal bell has sounded as the last tardy guest dashed up in a hansom. We are, all of us, somewhat jaded after our hard day's work of seeking amusement, and are looking forward with more or less appetite to the excellent dinner which we know, or think we know, awaits us. Suddenly the door is dashed open, the pallid face of the butler is seen, followed by other pallid faces, one of which (the cook's, as it turned out) strikes me even in

that supreme moment as resembling a lemon-tinted blancmange, which is on the point of falling to pieces.

"Oh, my lord, they're pouring water down *our* kitchen chimney. They've covered up the chimney-pot with a wet blanket! All the smoke is coming down! Every scrap of the dinner is entirely spoiled! The kitchen fire's out!"

These despairing sentences were jerked out from the lips of the bevy of scared servants crowding on the landing. Before any answer could be made a fire-engine dashed furiously up, and after a rapid glance up at the roof of the house, the fireman in charge knocked vigorously at the door. Looking back on the whole scene, what struck me as most curious was, the bewildering rapidity of everything. One moment the calm, cold, polished *insouciance* of a London household, and the next the wild confusion which pervaded every part of the establishment. Our host tried to bear himself bravely, and merely ejaculating, "I suppose the kitchen chimney is on fire," looked round at us as if the whole affair were a joke at which we were all expected to laugh. But with some of his guests, poor man, dinner was the great event of the day; and they met his nervous smile by

a fixed and determined look which plainly said, "I came here to eat, and I expect to be fed." I thought to myself, with a pleasant feeling of general superiority to the possibility of such mischance, "*I* always take care to have *my* kitchen chimney well swept the day before I give a party;" and I suppose I must have murmured some words to that effect, for the mistress exclaimed, quite fiercely, to the group of servants—

"Yes! why has not the chimney been swept?"

"Oh my lady! it *has* been swept, only two days ago," cried the housekeeper; "*our* chimney is all right; it's the *next door* chimney as is on fire, and they've got on the roof and made a mistake about the chimney pots; for naturally, you see, my lady, there's a deal of smoke coming out of ours."

It was quite true; the owners of the house next door had gone out to dinner, so the cook had seized that opportunity to melt or clarify some dripping, which she intended to sell. In taking it hastily off the fire, she had upset the saucepan, hence a tremendous flare, and an instantaneous ignition of soot. In dreadful terror and dismay, the luckless woman had sent the page and the scullery-maid out on the roof, with

blankets and pails of water. They, poor children, had mistaken the chimney, or been afraid to go near it, and had directed their well-meant efforts to the *next* chimney. Oh, it was such a scene of confusion, and the end of it all was that we got no dinner at all. I came back to my own deserted house, where only bread and milk could be procured for dinner: but I may truly say, I never laughed so much in my life, although I did not dare to give way to my inclination to giggle until I was fairly in the cab, on my way home.

But to return to kitchens in their normal state, and with fires in their grates, and not up the chimney. Every cook has her own favourite kind of saucepans and kitchen implements. If, however, they are of copper (which are best in many respects), then they ought to be re-tinned constantly, as I need hardly say here how poisoned food becomes when prepared in a copper vessel of which the tin lining is worn out. All the woodwork of the kitchen, such as dressers, tables, meat-screen, etc., should be kept as clean and sweet, and white as possible. I always like to have my kitchen walls "coloured," as it is called, and the ceiling whitewashed once every year; for nothing encourages a cook to

keep her kitchen exquisitely clean, so much as her mistress giving her every facility for doing so, and noticing and praising the result of her labours.

With regard to black-beetles—those plagues of a London kitchen—I am sure that dirt is the chief cause of their swarming fertility. I once took a house in which they abounded in hundreds. They penetrated upstairs, devoured the covers of the books in the library, and made themselves quite at home in the dining-room. I had the boards beneath the kitchen-dresser removed, and bucketfuls of fluff, and dust, and dirt removed ; all holes in the wall stopped up (carbolic-acid powder having first been well shaken down them), and phosphoric paste spread all about. In a month every beetle had disappeared entirely, and whenever one showed itself afterwards, the war of extermination commenced with renewed vigour.

And now I think I have come to the end of my subject ; though that end, such as it is, has been reached by a rather devious and flowery route, for the narrow path of economy and prudent management is a steep and up-hill one. Yet it must be trodden by many a girl who is

now learning her lessons, and looking forward to the day when she will be at the head of a household. When I began its ascent, I found I knew nothing whatever on any subject connected with it, and my housekeeping mistakes and misfortunes might fill a volume. So the object of these discursive papers is to induce young women to direct their attention to the subjects which will probably form the business and ought to form also one of the chief pleasures of their lives,—the keeping, or seeing that everything in their houses is kept beautifully clean and fresh and bright, and contriving to have things tasteful and pretty, without spending a great deal of money. Again, I say, it's faculty,—nothing but faculty. You all have more or less of it, be sure; and I advise you to cultivate it to the utmost extent.



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